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Calgary metro

Your essential daily news | WEEKEND, MARCH 18-20, 2016

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DIVERGENT SERIES

Big brands outshining big names at box office

metroLIFE

Jason Mehmel, director of King Kirby
JENNIFER FRIESEN/ FOR METRO

BEHIND THE MASKS

Sage Theatre honouring creator of Captain America, Iron Man

metroNEWS

BUDGET LEAK

Big win for cities

Billions pledged for social, green infrastructure projects, transit

Ottawa appears ready to boost its share of the funding it provides municipalities as it looks to fast-track an infrastructure spending spree, Torstar News Service has learned.

Finance Minister Bill Morneau will take the wraps off the Liberals' first budget on Tuesday.

And sources say municipal officials can expect good news on two fronts: A change to the traditional one-third funding formula — at least for some projects — and financial help for the prep work needed to get those infrastructure projects off the ground.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Thursday previewed the upcoming fiscal blueprint, saying his government has chosen "investment" over "austerity."

Trudeau also confirmed that the Liberals will use the upcoming budget to roll back the age of eligibility for Old Age Security payments to 65 from 67 as promised, reversing a change introduced by the previous Conservative government.

The Liberals pledged a big hike in infrastructure funding during last year's election campaign — an extra $60 billion over the coming decade. The budget will detail the government's plan to roll out the cash in two phases.

The initial phase, to be stretched over two years, will allow infrastructure cash to be spent on existing projects. Billed as "recapitalization," it will enable municipalities to tackle a backlog of unfunded work.

Trudeau confirmed Thursday that the government's initial focus will be on funding repairs to existing infrastructure.

"The first two years, we're going to do the unsexy things that governments hate to announce, recapitalization of infrastructure, maintenance, upgrades, the things that you don't get to cut a ribbon and announce a shiny new building on."

Typically, the cost of infrastructure has been split equally between municipalities, provinces and the federal government. But municipal leaders have appealed to the federal government to consider paying a greater share — up to 50 per cent — with the provinces paying around 33 per cent and municipalities on the hook for 20 per cent. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

What does it mean for Calgary?

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

Coun. Andre Chabot thinks the funding is great news for Calgary, and he's curious to see how it will be divvied up among municipalities.

On a population basis, he thinks it should work out to about $2 billion over 10 years.

"It's pretty much what we need from the feds to build our Green Line," said Chabot. "Although it may not build all the projects we have — it's certainly welcome news."

He said this money won't take away the need for the province to put in one third of the cost on the Green Line.

He said if they're willing to fund up to 50 per cent of projects, the city has many shovel-ready projects that can be started.

"We'll have to work it out between the two levels of government on how to maximize those."

He thinks the money will help keep the city in the black.

"If we structure our expenditures based on the cash flow, we should be able to get away without borrowing any money."

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

Spotlight on Cuba: How Canada made the Cuba-U.S. meeting happen. **World**

INSTAGRAM FASHIONISTA

#FASHION #FOOD #LIFESTYLE

CALGARY FASHION BLOGGER @SHEENAVIRMANI TURNS INSTAGRAM INTO SPONSORSHIPS

PHOTOS COURTESY SHEENA VIRMANI

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

Fashion Blogger Sheena Virmani is a modern minimalist.

She's confident in her style, what colours she wears on her Instagram account and what she blogs about — and the modern minimalist tone that accompanies it all.

It's the confidence and consistency that has landed her sponsorships to write about and show off businesses like Viniq sparkling wine, Smart Buy glasses and Essence cosmetics.

She's taken her love of fashion, food and lifestyle and turned it into a small business.

"It didn't start as a business, but that's what it's grown into," she said.

"After I started getting more followers and more attention on the blog, I had to start thinking about my brand."

It's been a slow rise: Virmani started fashion blogging two and a half years ago, but it's only now started to gain traction.

Like any business, the first year was a slog — she only posted occasionally, and even now she's still working her day job as an IT consultant.

"I kind of combined my tech savvy-ness and my love for fashion and lifestyle to create my blog," she said.

What that combination produced was a weekly schedule, targeting a demographic of 18 to 30 and, most importantly, consistently. She had to nail down her topics.

"So, if you follow me on Instagram, you won't see random posts," she explained. "You'll see stuff about fashion, food and lifestyle. You won't see photos of me hanging out with my friends."

Virmani said it's important to have consistency with each image, and curating the images as a whole.

She sticks to lots of whites and neutral colours.

Virmani said that's reflected in her clothing, but also the backgrounds she shoots against and even the dishes and tables her food is on — so when viewed as a whole, her feed looks consistent.

Virmani said it's her look and how she captures her demographic that has PR firms and local brands approaching her for partnerships. It's not all about the number of followers.

And despite giving up all the free evenings and weekends she has outside of work, it's the most fun she's having in life.

"If it wasn't still fun for me, I wouldn't be doing it."

INSTAGRAM

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IN BRIEF

RCMP investigating discovery of human skull
The Gleichen RCMP detachment are examining human remains found on a floodplain south of the town of Gleichen.

A local resident walking in the area found a weathered skull near the Bow River and alerted the police.

The place where the skull was found is part of the flood plain of the Bow River that was inundated with water in 2013 during the flooding that hit the region. METRO

Police warn of traffic violation scam
Calgary police are warning citizens after fraudsters targeted Calgarians through an email scam meant to lure victims through allegations of a traffic offence.

Two citizens reported receiving an email on Monday, stating they'd been observed committing a traffic offence by a camera. One email asked the recipient to click on a link, which police believe would have sent a virus to the recipient's computer. The other email suggested the victim would be reported to police if they did not pay a fine. METRO

Child in critical condition after being hit by car
A school-aged child is in critical condition after being struck by a vehicle in Cranston Wednesday afternoon.

Paramedics responded to Cranston Gate and Cranford Drive at 5 p.m. and transported a school-aged male to the South Health Campus suffering from critical, life-threatening injuries.

Police are investigating the incident. METRO

Calgary police is hiring a new yoga instructor, but some aren't sure it's the best use of the force's funds. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Police yoga rankles

TOUGH ECONOMY

'Not a need ... a want,' says critic of post seeking new instructor

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Ashtanga, Core Chaos and yoga for your spine.

These are the yoga classes Calgary police have been taking from a local yogi for some time. But now the force is looking for a new face to help with sun salutations.

The post has some wondering why officers need a private instructor to help with their daily practice.

It's part of the force's wellness program — a perk for the job. The Calgary police website states there are fitness facilities at most CPS buildings. The force even provides a family doctor and chiropractor.

The online request for proposal posting is looking for "a yoga instructor with proven experience and expertise to provide yoga classes for sworn officers and civilian members of the Calgary Police Service." There's no salary listed. The past instructor seemed to give classes several times a day two times a week.

Calgary police spokesman Kevin Brookwell said the position isn't a salary job, it's just a contract.

"Through a number of studies and what you learn from other police agencies around the world there's some support you can give your members to keep them healthy and keep them at work," said Brookwell.

The job opportunity has some groups raising eyebrows during a dismal economic climate.

"There might be some kind of wellness justification that can be made here," said Paige MacPherson, Alberta director at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. "Our economy is struggling greatly provincewide, and certainly these are the times when we hear government talk on scaling back on things that are maybe wants instead of needs."

She said in this case it's clear the Calgary Police Service haven't been issued a "proper directive about saving money."

"It's good that this isn't a new job position that's being created," said MacPherson. "This is not a need, this is a want. And while it may be a very nice perk to have at work this is the kind of thing where taxpayers are cutting their own budgets around their kitchen tables; we should have our own governments cutting their budgets around their tables as well."

Coun. Ward Sutherland, chair of the Priorities and Finance Committee and member of the Calgary Police Commission, said he sees this as a non-story.

"It's part of the wellness clinic they have, and it's part of the budget," said Sutherland. "It actually saves off leave time, sickness time."

Police have a tricky, stressful job and Sutherland said these small perks actually help save money and keep police out on the streets. Especially now with the economic downturn he said these budgeted programs can help officers who are facing more call volumes and crime.

COMMENT

Coun. Sean Chu, who used to be a Calgary police officer, said he never used the classes — he's always been very healthy. He said he's seen aerobic fitness classes and other offerings that help officers avoid hours at the desk.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

What Calgary Catholic wants

The Calgary Catholic School Board is ready to submit their asks for capital infrastructure projects to take place over the next three years — citing growth as the main reason behind them.

The submission includes prioritized requests for seven new neighbourhood elementary or elementary/junior high schools, a new junior/senior high school in Airdrie, two high schools in Calgary, and major modernization requests for 12 additional schools.

"We've had significant growth year after year and that's a trend that is continuing," said Calgary Catholic School Board chair Cheryl Low. "Our schools right now are sitting at a 95 per cent utilization rate, which is above the benchmark set by the government."

Low said although Calgary Catholic will have 10 new schools built in the next two years, student population continues to increase and the demand for more schools will continue to be high.

"It's going to be really critical for us to be able to provide those effective learning spaces for our students," she said.

The submission also includes a number of modernization projects. "Modernization is a really critical part to the model we have at Calgary Catholic, which is to ensure that we're maintaining our buildings so that we get the longevity out of them, while continuing to have a quality environment for education," said Low.

She said although they have no specific information from the government, they're in constant discussions with them. "They understand our priorities and our needs," said Low. "We know these are challenging times but we work very closely to make sure our needs are being met."

PC Alberta

CALGARY CURRIE PCAA
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, April 2, 2016 10:00am | 50 Plus Club | 2609 19 Ave SW

The Calgary Currie Progressive Conservative Constituency Association of Alberta will conduct an Annual General Meeting for the purpose of electing a Board of Directors and related business

A 2016 Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta membership is required to vote and you must reside within the boundaries of the Constituency. Membership are available at the PCAA website www.pcalberta.org. Proof of age and residency within the boundaries will be required.

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The Wildrose claim Marcella Munro wrote off expenses before she was hired as the government's Calgary rep. CONTRIBUTED

HEALTH CARE

Centralized ambulance dispatch up in air

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Health Minister Sarah Hoffman won't say if EMS dispatch centralization will be best for Calgary.

On Wednesday, Wildrose Health Critic Drew Barnes slammed Edmonton's centralized dispatch system, noting Calgary could see a massive increase in code reds if the system is implemented in the city.

Code reds are times when there are no ambulances to dispatch. Documents revealed Edmonton saw 888 code reds during the first 11 months of 2015. By contrast, Calgary experienced 39.

But Minister Hoffman noted Edmonton's dispatch system records in real time, meaning it records code reds even if they only last for a second.

She said data that measures total time in hours is better.

In 2015, Edmonton saw 27-hours worth of code red situations, down 22 hours from 49 hours in 2014.

Calgary's dispatch system doesn't record in hours.

She said the government is still reviewing the data to see if centralization is the best option for Calgary, adding she's been in discussions with Mayor Naheed Nenshi about the project.

"It's certainly important that we get that decision right for the people of Calgary," she told reporters Thursday.

But Barnes said Hoffman was "waffling" on the issue, noting it's costing taxpayers $60,000 per month for the government to rent the empty dispatch centre.

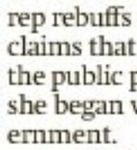
Nenshi, too, has said he hopes the province pulls the plug on its plans to centralize dispatch services in the city.

Hoffman said there's no risk in delaying dispatch centralization of the facility and made no note of a deadline to make a decision.

Expenses questioned

MARCELLA MUNRO

Opposition challenges NDP rep's writeoffs



Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Premier Rachel Notley's Calgary rep rebuffs the Wildrose Party's claims that she started milking the public purse months before she began working for the government.

Documents by the Official Opposition show Marcella Munro, stakeholder relations and communications manager at the McDougall Centre, began writing off expenses on June 14, racking up $3,297.29 from June 17 to July 3.

Munro didn't sign her contract for the stakeholder relations position until July 27.

But the Premier's office confirmed Munro was contracted by the government from June 15 to July 3, working with the communications team in the Human Services department.

The government said she was sole sourced, but didn't meet the $10,000 threshold for her contract to be disclosed publicly.

However, the Wildrose charge that receipts weren't attached to some of Munro's expenses — a move that contradicts government policy saying that disclosing receipts for travel expenses is required.

The government said her receipts are easily viewable online.

During Thursday's question period at the Alberta Legislature, Deputy Premier Sarah Hoffman said the government will look into the matter, adding inappropriate expenses will be paid back by the employee.

> **We need to make sure we know whether or not they were an employee.**
> Deputy Premier Sarah Hoffman

"We need to make sure we know whether or not they were an employee or a contractor and what was involved," she said.

The Wildrose said it also appears Munro may have received a free week's pay, but the government disputes that claim, too.

The Premier's Office said her first day at the McDougall Centre was on Aug. 17, though she began working on Aug. 10, which is what her contract stated.

Munro also received $7,000 for her move from Vancouver to Calgary.

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Low bidding for chuckwagon ads

Chuckwagon driver Kurt Bensmiller poses with a chuckwagon after going for the top money at the Calgary Stampede Canvas Auction on Thursday. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

STAMPEDE

Oil downturn makes for worst showing since 2010

$2.3M

The auction raised just under $2.3 million, or about an average of $64,000 per driver.

Mark Sutherland knows first-hand just how bad the downturn in Canada's oil and gas sector really is.

The 45-year-old chuckwagon driver was one of the first to lose his job in 2015 in community relations at a major oil and gas company after 15 years on the job.

He saw the impact again Thursday night at the annual chuckwagon canvas auction for the Calgary Stampede.

That's the event that gives businesses a chance to bid on one of 36 chuckwagon drivers. The winners pay to have their company logo advertised on the canvas covering the rig that is pulled around a track by a team of horses.

"When you buy a newspaper or radio ad it doesn't have a price tag on it for all your customers to see, but when you buy a chuckwagon advertisement it has a pricetag and so companies, I would assume, are afraid about the optics," Sutherland said.

"They know they need to be part of the biggest event but in this economy it's pretty difficult to lay people off and then spend money on advertising."

Thursday's auction raised just under $2.3 million, or about an average of $64,000 per driver.

That number is $480,000 lower than last year's total of $2,782,000 and the worst showing since the last oil and gas downturn in 2010 when it brought in only $1,966,000.

Kurt Bensmiller, the two-time defending GMC Rangeland Derby Champion, received the highest bid on the night at $120,000, down about $50,000 from last year.

"When the oil's down, everything's down since our economy is built on that, but there's still a lot of great companies doing good out there and it showed tonight," he said.

"We budget our whole season on the Calgary Stampede. The other sales definitely help but this is the big one that you know is guaranteed money that you base your whole season on."

Sutherland's bid was $85,000, which was up from last year. He predicted things are not going to turn around anytime soon, either for chuckwagons or the oilpatch.

"I have a bunch of great friends who work downtown and I'm still concerned for them," he said. "They're all on the chopping block too — we haven't seen the last of it. I think we're in trouble. I think we're going to be in trouble for a little while longer."

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HAN KIM — 24 YEARS
JOE CHIARIZIO — 48 YEARS
AARON SNOWIE — 8 YEARS
MICHAEL CYBULSKI — 10YEARS
PHIL LAWRENCE — 22 YEARS
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Oliver DesCoteaux, left, and Jeevan Pawa in Istanbul, Turkey. CONTRIBUTED

Friends remember Oliver DesCoteaux

CANCER

Family plans memorial fund with $100,000 raised on site

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

Friends of Oliver DesCoteaux said the number of people who stepped up to help him during his time of need is a testament to the impact he had on the lives of those he met.

DesCoteaux, who suffered from a rare disease called INI1-deficient sinonasal basaloid carcinoma — a genetic condition where cancerous cells grow at an alarming rate — died suddenly Tuesday.

"His friends will testify to the fact that his greatest achievements were his relationships," read a statement posted to DesCoteaux's Facebook page by family. "The impact he left on people's lives was enormous. If you want to measure someone's life by the impact on others, then Oliver lived a very long life. A quick read of the comments posted on his fundraising campaign site will support this."

Jeevan Pawa, a friend who studied with DesCoteaux at the University of Calgary, said over 1,000 people donated to the GoFundMe page DesCoteaux set up to raise money for treatment in the states.

"The GoFundMe is the perfect example of the effect Oliver had on people," he said. "That's how many people were willing to support him and go out on a limb for him."

Danielle Sept, another university friend of DesCoteaux's, said he was one of the most genuine people she had ever met.

"There are a million nice things to say about Oliver," she said "He was the rock, always there for you with a smile on his face."

She said DesCoteaux touched the lives of everyone he met.

"There are literally people from all over the world writing messages on his Facebook page about how they met him and how he impacted their lives," she said.

Sept said the family plans to use the over $100,000 raised on DesCoteaux's GoFundMe to start some sort of memorial fund for him, although they aren't yet sure on details.

"It's great," said Pawa. "During times such as this you really just want to keep the memory of that person alive, especially because he contributed so much to the community, so I think a memorial fund is a great way to do that."

A public memorial service will be held on Monday, March 21, at McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes, 5008 Elbow Drive SW, at 2 p.m.

FULL LIFE

Oliver's accomplishments

- Won Golden Geer award for Engineering Spirit, nominated and presented to him by Jeevan Pawa.
- President Mechanical Engineering Student Society in his final year
- Corporate representative Petroleum Engineering Calgary Young Professionals
- Humanitarian Aid volunteer Mozambique, Africa

Oliver DesCoteaux and Danielle Sept posing at their iron ring ceremony. CONTRIBUTED

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THE LATEST LAUNCHES, NEW ARRIVALS AND WHAT TO SHOP FOR SPRING

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TOMMY HILFIGER DRESSES

These updated silhouettes were designed so the wearer could walk into her closet, put on a pair of sporty shoes or flats and still feel polished in her new Tommy dress *(pictured, $154)*. In our dress department.

MR. BURBERRY

The new male companion to the popular My Burberry for her, this woody-herbal fragrance is inspired by traditional British compositions, with notes of cardamom, tarragon and birch leaf *(100 mL EDT, $100)*.

Exclusively ours

HUDSON NORTH

Our line of affordable men's basics includes T-shirts *($12.99 or two for $20)* and shorts *($24.99 or two for $40)* that are sure to be summer staples.

Exclusively ours

DESIGN LAB SWIMWEAR

Go bright and bold this summer in Design Lab's debut swimwear line—an assortment of maillots, tankinis, mix-and-match tops and bottoms—which feature splashy colours, pretty prints, and flirty details like cutouts and ruffle trim *(from $44 – $98)*.

Exclusively ours

KARL LAGERFELD PARIS

With a career spanning 60 years, Lagerfeld combines his style wisdom with a Parisian sense of whimsy for this collection of feminine fashion, shoes and accessories *(top, $99; pant, $109). Also available at thebay.com*

SIGNORINA MISTERIOSA

Top notes of wild blackberry reveal an intoxicating heart of white flowers in this mysterious scent from the venerable Italian fashion house, Salvatore Ferragamo *(50 mL, $105; 100 mL, $145)*.

NESPRESSO PRODIGIO

If your first urge upon waking is to reach for your smartphone, the Prodigio will perk you up. The first espresso machine to use Bluetooth connectivity, the Prodigio *($319.95)* brews espresso remotely on command, in addition to an app's-worth of other futuristic features.

Exclusively ours

IMNYC ISAAC MIZRAHI

Known for his playful, colourful, wearable clothing, Isaac Mizrahi launches IMNYC, a collection of classic tailored and feminine silhouettes.

Exclusively ours

MARTHA STEWART COLLECTION BEDDING

Martha Stewart's bedding is a reflection of the lifestyle maven's taste and style. The mix-and-match Whim line *(five-piece twin comforter set, $160)* is bright, cheerful and, dare we say, dreamy.

Exclusively ours

1670

Our recently launched collection of slim suit separates *(jacket, $129.99; pant, $69.99)* now features dress shirts *($29.99)* and coordinating neckwear *($14.99)*.

HUDSON'S BAY

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BANFF

Oldest park to get $39-million upgrade

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

Banff National Park will be the benefactor of $39 million in funding to invest in the recovery of species at risk and to improve the park's forest ecosystems.

The funding was announced Thursday by Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna.

The federal government said in a news release it remains committed to preserving and promoting national, provincial and territorial parks as "they are an important part of local economies across the country."

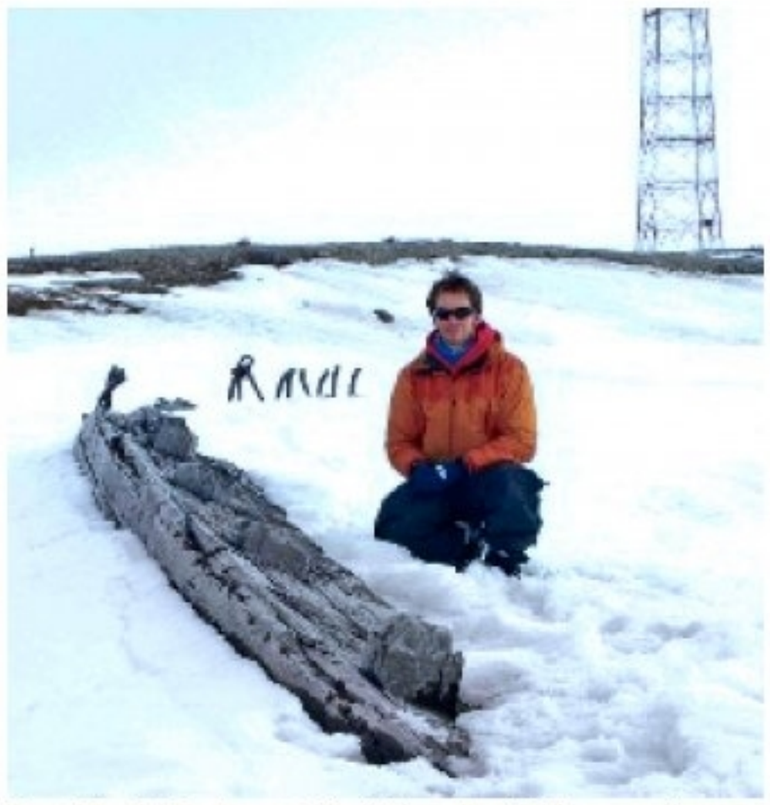
"Our government is committed to protecting and restoring Canada's natural and cultural heritage," McKenna said. "These investments will continue to improve and restore ecological integrity in the park and expand cultural heritage programming to ensure visitors and future generations can enjoy Banff National Park and understand the significance of cultural heritage in Canadian history."

Banff National Park, which was established in 1885, is the oldest national park in Canada.

Last year, Banff welcomed 3.8 million visitors, making it the single most popular national park in the country.

Over the next five years, Parks Canada plans to invest $3 billion to support infrastructure work, heritage, visitor, waterway and highway assets located within national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas across the country.

Parks Canada says the infrastructure will directly restore ecological integrity. The improvements include significant advancements to animal underpasses on the Trans-Canada Highway, and rehabilitating the Lake Louise campground.



Brent Else in his element. The University of Calgary professor and his colleague Scott Jasechko were granted funding for lab equipment they'll use for years. COURTESY BRENT ELSE

U of C profs get funding

WATER

$412,000 to enable study of CO_2 release, absorbtion

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Sharing is caring, and after a much-needed injection of funds, two University of Calgary profs on very different sides of the H2O study spectrum are finding their passions aren't as opposite as they once thought.

This week, several U of C projects were granted funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation's (CFI) John R. Evans Leaders Fund. The fund was created to help universities garner the best and brightest researchers by giving them access to state-of-the-art research tools. For Scott Jasechko and Brent Else, the money means a whole new reason to shout, "To the lab!"

Their $206,026 award is being matched by the provincial government, which means they can purchase equipment that will help with their project Investigating Carbon and Water Cycles from the Oilsands to the Arctic.

"Fresh water bodies, like lakes and rivers, stuff like that, they tend to release a lot of CO_2 to the atmosphere," said Else. "On the other side of things, oceans tend to absorb a lot of CO_2 from the atmosphere. We want to study that side of the equation as well."

Looking at these two topics together, the pair explain they can look at both fresh and salt water systems to see what role they play in how quickly CO_2 accumulates in the atmosphere.

Else, an assistant professor who specializes in Arctic Marine Sciences, and Jasechko, who specializes in water resources research, found this opportunity to be a great way to ensure they work alongside each other for a long time.

Money will go toward key instruments they expect to be using for the next 10 years. The equipment will also allow them to take equipment offsite — can anyone say field trip?

But it's not just the profs celebrating their cash injection. Jasechko said when it comes down to it, this is a big win for students too.

"A number of new avenues have been opened up for us," he said. "One of those is the ability to provide graduate students and undergraduate students at the University of Calgary with better hands-on training."

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> University of Calgary Prof. Scott Jasechko

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TOYOTA SMART BUY EVENT

It's time to Thank Your Driver

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

On Friday when you're dragging your butt out of bed, waiting for the weekend to start, don't forget the person behind the wheel getting you there. Here are a few operators and their stories to get you inspired.

JENNIFER FRIESEN/METRO

Steven Neilson
This guy may just be the youngest Calgary Transit driver. The 23-year-old said he's always wanted to be part of the bigger picture. "I wanted to be a part of the City of Calgary, be an ambassador," said Steven Neilson. "I want to help everybody get to where they need to go."

Being part of Calgary Transit puts him front and centre with 2,400 transit operators on the road. "You're everywhere," he said. Neilson said he's always there for his passengers, whether it's in a listening role, or just simply getting them from Point A to Point B. The young operator is on what's called the "spare board," so he's not assigned to any particular route. Every day he's doing something different and he doesn't know his route until he gets into work. With only a year under his belt, Nielson is already aspiring to be like Calgary Transit's recently retired Badge No. 1 George Dorn — which could put him as the most veteran operator. In other words, he's in it for the long haul.

This is Neilson's second Thank Your Driver Day.

HELEN PIKE/METRO

Fahmida Tariq
This driver loves nature. "The biggest enjoyment for me in my job is my window," said Fahmida Tariq. "I can see the beautiful winter skies, mountains all the time, that's the biggest inspiration in my life." She said while other Calgarians are behind a desk in offices, she enjoys rainbows, rain — anything you can imagine. It's a big window to look out of.

She's been a Calgary Transit driver for nine years, and her work experience has transformed her life. "I was a bold girl already, but I created my new personality here," Tariq said. Coming from Pakistan, she said the culture shock was extreme, but her time with Transit has really helped her settle in and love being a Calgarian. It even helped her relate to her kids better. Tariq jokes her job, most of the time, is a piece of cake — it's her housework with four kids that keeps her especially busy. One thing she wants passengers to know is drivers are human beings too — they have good and bad days. "We need a little smile, a softness in the eyes," she said.

JENNIFER FRIESEN/METRO

Chris Richardson
His Transit career happened totally by accident. Chris Richardson got out of the oil and gas industry — he was an operator looking after pump checks — and it sounds like he got out just in time. "I was tired of it," Richardson said. After a short stint in safety he decided to give the City of Calgary a go.

Suddenly he found himself interviewing for a job where he'd do something new: Drive a bus. It's been over four years and he's not looking back. Richardson said there are some days, depending on what route you're on, sometimes people don't feel like thanking their driver. But he noted about 85 per cent of his riders thank him before leaving the bus.

Richardson does a lot in his day to day to make customers smile. He likes to joke around. One of his fondest memories came one night during the hockey playoffs when he first started. "Boston and Chicago were playing," he said. He turned around to the passengers and asked the Blackhawks fans to get on one side and the Bruins fans to get off the bus — everyone was in on the joke.

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COMMUNITY ACTION

Parents call for diabetes policy to protect kids

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

An Alberta parent group is sounding the alarm over the province's lack of policy and protocol around kids with diabetes.

Spokeswoman for Dial in to Diabetes Shannon Wiebe said other provinces, including Quebec and B.C., have policies in place. Without one, kids like Wiebe's son, who was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, are missing out in school activities due to safety concerns.

One story she shared from a mother in the group involved a four-year-old boy who needed help holding his blood sugar meter against his finger. A program said that teachers could not physically help — only offer verbal support.

"We're not trying to say, Look how bad this is," said Weibe. "But, he's four. He has a terrifying disease. He can't do that on his own."

They want a policy that not only allows professionals to assist in testing blood sugar, but also allows kids to test wherever they are. Currently, because testing involves taking a drop of blood, some students are asked to go to the principal or nurse's office to test themselves.

Wiebe said this could put the child at risk — if their blood sugar is low, they may already be dizzy or disoriented just walking to the office.

In a policy, the group also wants personnel at each school trained to administer glucagon injections. The trained personnel could also go on field trips with the kids if parents could not attend, mitigating any risk so the child won't have to miss out. They also want the right to an individualized care plan.

Education Minister David Eggen said he would be open to discussions about diabetes and student health in general.

An ADAC split could help prices, according to Dr. David Swann.
THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Dental split could lower cost: Swann

HEALTH

Separating from college wouldn't lower prices: ADAC

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Alberta Health is enquiring about dividing the Alberta Dental Association and College (ADAC), a move that Alberta Liberal Leader Dr. David Swann thinks would make dental prices more competitive — and possibly lower — across the province.

For the past six months, the government has been reviewing Alberta's dental fees, which are higher than other jurisdictions across Canada.

But recently, about 100 Alberta dentists filed a lawsuit claiming ADAC has been heavy-handed in restricting dentists from advertising on websites and social media, violating their Charter rights to freedom of expression and their ability to compete for business.

Swann — who takes issue with ADAC advertising standards — said the government sought his input, asking him if he thinks the organization's two branches — the association and the college — being under one roof is a problem. The ministry said it's also had discussions with ADAC.

He said dentists can't offer anything unique, like special rates for low-income families on specific days.

"It raises the question of whether that would be different — if they separate the association and the college maybe we can see changes to our advertising standards," he said. "It would benefit people. It would benefit the poor."

But ADAC — which denies the allegations and will contest them in court — disagrees with Swann's remarks.

Dr. Harry Ames, memberships co-ordinater at ADAC, said there's no advantage to an organization split. He said its members set their own prices, not the college.

"Dentists are able to advertise anything they want, as long as it's not misleading," he said. "Some fees are harder to advertise than others."

100

Approximately 100 dentists recently filed a lawsuit claiming the ADAC heavily restricted their ability to advertise.

Though dental fees are higher in Alberta, he said the take-home pay for Albertans is relatively the same compared to other jurisdictions.

"The cost of business is higher (in Alberta)," he said, adding dental services could decrease in the province if it's not profitable.

Under the Health Professions Act, the minister can require the organization to separate.

Hoffman said she intends to make an evidence-based decision regarding the split of ADAC.

She said the government is also considering a public fee schedule — something other jurisdictions have and what Alberta had before 1997.

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Downtown parks dilemma

COMMUNITY

Finding recreation space in the Beltline costly

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

If the city wants to get people living in the downtown, it can't forget parks.

That's the message from Ward 8 Coun. Evan Woolley, who represents the Beltline.

"You have many thousands of people in the Beltline that have no park. And when you think the Beltline has 23,000 people ... the Beltline is horrifically underserved.

He said from a city planning standpoint, the Beltline is considered parks deficient.

The city has two ways of measuring how well a community is served by its parks: One is the percentage of net developable area that is devoted to parks. In newer communities, the goal is 10 per cent.

The second is hectares of park space per thousand residents. The target number is at least two hectares per thousand.

"The parks department — kudos to them — the parks that we do have downtown, they've made them awesome," said Woolley.

Thompson Family Park is currently undergoing a major redevelopment which should make the space more attractive and increase the amount of green space at the park. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

However he still thinks the city can do more in terms of acquisition in order to bring the Beltline's numbers up.

However, just acquiring more parkland downtown isn't necessarily providing the city with the best bang for its buck, according to Keath Parker, manager of strategic services with the city's parks department.

"It's not logical for us to spend — whatever the figure is — to raze the land and knock down buildings for parks from millions and millions of taxpayer dollars," he said.

What the city does instead, Parker said, is try to improve the carrying capacity of existing parks with better infrastructure.

He said the downtown has fewer parks because city planning was very different a century ago, when the Beltline was first developed.

Parker added that while Beltline is officially a parks deficient community, the numbers don't include regional parks, such as Prince Island Park or Lindsay Park.

He said the city may change its methodology on including those parks, which would completely change the numbers.

Park space

Park space as a percentage of total community
Beltline – 3.7%
Chaparral – 10.7%
Citadel – 10.21%

Park space per 1,000 residents
Beltline – .378 hectares
Chaparral – 2.36
Citadel – 2.83

TOURISM

Alberta expected to have a strong year

National parks in Alberta saw an increase in visitors last year and another strong tourism season is expected this year.

According to the Alberta Tourism Market Monitor, the low Canadian dollar, healthy U.S. economy and more Albertans staying close to home contributed to an 8.1 per cent rise in visitors last summer over the previous year. Hotels, restaurants and retail shops in Banff and Jasper are starting to hire staff.

Meanwhile, officials with the hospitality and tourism program at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology are hosting an expo to help students find jobs. Instructor Ken Upton says not only is there an influx of Americans, but also tourists from China, Korea and Japan.

Stacey Fisher from Discover Banff Tours says some of their American customers don't even realize that their dollar stands up so well in comparison to the Canadian dollar.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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The exhibition is hoping to spur job growth with the $500-million expansion. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

BMO to expand for Stampede

TOURISM

Convention set to enter Tier-1 market

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

The Calgary Stampede is moving up a tier in the convention world.

Thursday, the exhibition revealed plans to double the BMO Centre in size in an effort to enter the Tier-1 market for international conventions.

Warren Connell, CEO for Calgary Stampede said the city has all the key elements essential to being successful in the top tier.

"Those things include a world-class volunteer base — which we think Calgary excels at better than anybody else, having a cultural, arts and entertainment community that is thriving and growing — which we've all seen what has happened in Calgary over the last decade and we're quite proud of," he said. "And, having a differentiator, so some of the greatest cities worldwide have that unique niche that people want to come and see, so with us, that Western hospitality market has always been attractive to outside groups."

Connell said the plan for the BMO expansion would put Calgary behind only Toronto in terms of convention centre size and has been in the works for the last number of years.

"This is not (reactive) to the economy or anything else, if the economy was still the way it was two years ago, we would be doing the same thing," he said. "We believe this is really about the community of Calgary and the Stampede's role is to be a part of that community building."

In contrast to the request for money from the City of Calgary by Calgary Sports and Entertainment for the CalgaryNEXT project, the BMO expansion — which will cost an estimated $500 million dollars — will not be subsidized by the municipality.

"We're very proud that the BMO Centre operates with enough money to cover the costs and also to maintain the building, and that's a model we're taking forward as well," said Connell.

He said having both the Flames and the Saddledome on Stampede Park has played a role in attracting international events to Stampede.

"The only reason CalgaryNEXT isn't a part of Stampede Park is that it doesn't fit," he said.

When asked to compare the BMO's expansion funding model with that of CalgaryNEXT, Connell said it wasn't his place to comment. "I would let you make any leaps you would like to make," he said.

$87 million

An estimated $87 million will be generated into Canada's GDP after the project is complete.

AGRICULTURE

Grow Calgary rings in the season with a 'celerybration'

Spring has sprung for Calgary's little urban farm that could.

Sunday at 11:11 a.m. at 10319 West Valley Rd. SW, close to the Canada Olympic Centre, the charity farm will be hosting a spring "celerybration."

Volunteers and friends are encouraged to come down to help prepare the land for their fourth growing season with early germination.

Germination kits will be provided to take home, which is where the magic happens. The seedlings will grow in your warm abode, and then in six to eight weeks, it can be brought back to plant.

If you are thinking about going, dress appropriately for the weather, and bring snacks and water. There's an abundance of gardening gloves onsite, but volunteers are encouraged to bring their own.

This year Grow Calgary will be supporting 14 agencies with the fresh veggies they grow. METRO

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Deadline to ditch coal doable: Analyst

ELECTRICITY

Province plans to end all coal-fired power by 2030

The man hired to move Alberta away from coal-fired electricity says while it's a complex challenge, time is on the side of the province.

Terry Boston said Thursday that with a deadline of 2030, there's enough lag time to craft solutions that work best for the industry, ensure fair and consistent rates for taxpayers and keep the system running.

"Between now and 2030 we have a lot of time to analyze and to take the corrective action," Boston told reporters in a conference call.

As part of its climate change plan, Alberta is shutting down coal-fired electricity generation by 2030 for health reasons and to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

Twelve of Alberta's 18 coal-fired generating units are already expected to be shut down by then, so the focus of Boston's work will be on the remaining six.

18

The number of coal-fired power plants in Alberta, of which 12 are already due to power down by 2030.

Boston, who is from Tennessee, recently retired as the head of PJM Interconnection, which is the second largest centrally dispatched power system in the world.

He will be paid up to $600,000 and will deliver a list of options to the government by the fall.

"What I would see is not a heavy report, but a list of alternatives that Alberta could implement, highlighted (by) a best alternative in terms of what's best for the citizens of Alberta," said Boston.

"(And the plan must) ensure the reliability of (keeping) the lights on, or nothing else we do will matter."

By 2030, the plan is to have two-thirds of Alberta's coal generation capacity replaced by renewable energy. One third will be replaced by natural gas.

There are eight coal mines operating in Alberta. Five mines produce coal for the province's electricity sector.

In 2013 the electricity sector accounted for 17 per cent of Alberta's total GHG emissions. Most of that came from coal-fired generation.

Boston said the coal-reduction plan "will be a challenge because people have good, on-the-ground, long-term assets that they expect a return on. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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David Stephan and his wife Collet Stephan arrive at court on March 10 in Lethbridge. DAVID ROSSITER/THE CANADIAN PRESS

STEPHAN TRIAL

Ezekiel was severely dehydrated: doctor

The trial of parents facing charges in their young son's death was abruptly adjourned today after the defence objected to questions the Crown was asking one of its witnesses.

A doctor was testifying about Ezekiel Stephan's condition after he was rushed to Cardston Hospital in southern Alberta in March 2012.

Court was told the toddler, who was almost 19 months old, was pale and his skin had no life or texture when he arrived at the hospital.

When the doctor suggested the child's condition indicated severe dehydration, defence lawyer Shawn Buckley suggested the jury be excused from the courtroom.

Buckley's concerns and discussions between himself, the Crown and the judge can't be reported.

David and Collet Stephan have pleaded not guilty to failing to provide the necessities of life for Ezekiel, who died of bacterial meningitis.

Their trail is to resume Friday.

A naturopath testified Wednesday that she advised Collet Stephan to take Ezekiel to a hospital immediately.

Tracey Tannis told the jury that she made sure an employee passed on the advice when the mother called her Lethbridge clinic in March 2012.

Tannis said she never met Stephan, although the woman visited the clinic later in the day and picked up some echinacea for the boy.

Court has heard little Ezekiel stopped breathing soon after that and his parents called for an ambulance. He was rushed to a Calgary hospital, where he died a week later.

The trial has been told that the boy had been sick for several days and his parents thought he had croup. They treated him with natural remedies and homemade smoothies containing hot pepper, ginger root, horseradish and onion. THE CANADIAN PRESS

THE CASE

The Crown is arguing the Stephans didn't do enough to ensure their son had proper access to medical care. Meningitis, an inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord, can be life-threatening if not treated right away with antibiotics.

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Director salutes comic creator

SAGE THEATRE

King Kirby play unmasks the story of unsung superhero

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

Calgary's Sage Theatre is paying homage to the man who helped create Iron Man, Ant-Man, The Fantastic Four and a horde of other superheroes with a play about his life and ideas.

Yes, Stan Lee is in it, but no, it's not about him.

"The characters reach so wide, yet, if you ask people who created these characters, they may say Stan Lee, but very few say Jack Kirby," said Jason Mehmel, director of King Kirby.

The play begins with a very young Kirby talking about the spark that creates the universe. Mehmel said we see the work of that spark in recent blockbuster spectacles like The Avengers, Iron Man or the upcoming Captain America.

Jason Mehmel, a huge comic book fan, said Kirby's energy in creating characters like Captain America didn't translate into negotiations for credit. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

"But we don't always go back and look at that spark," Mehmel explained. "This is basically me and my team putting a lens on that spark and saying, let's just see what caused the explosion."

Kirby was prolific in his work, having co-created Captain America in the 1940s with Joe Simon. Despite having a cameo in the Captain America movie, Stan Lee didn't actually create the character, although from very early in Lee's career, he and Kirby became a powerful duo. Together, they co-created characters including X-Men, The Hulk and the Fantastic Four throughout the 1960s.

Kirby eventually left Marvel Comics to work at DC, feeling Marvel had treated him unfairly. To this day, Stan Lee receives a large portion of the credit for creating the characters, while Mehmel said many of Kirby's contributions are all but unknown to those outside the comic community.

"Kirby himself had opportunity to fight for the kind of credit his fans think he deserves, but he didn't make those choices," explained Mehmel. "His total belief in the elevation of the idea or quality of the work above anything else led him to have a tragic fall."

At DC, Kirby created his Fourth World series, but they proved to be unsuccessful and were cancelled, with some concepts and characters surviving in other comic series.

Mehmel said he searched the city far and wide to find a character who could play Kirby throughout his life, and with enough gravity to scale Kirby's ideas.

He chose actor Robert Klein to play the man who would create superheroes that stretch, villains that eat worlds and gods so immense in stature, it takes them eons just to blink. The play hits the stage on April 15 through Sage Theatre.

KIRBY'S MARVELLOUS CHARACTERS

Known as a creative dynamo, Kirby's work stretched decades, into hundreds of characters. "Someone once said that Kirby has forgotten more great ideas than most comic creators ever have," said Mehmel.

Kirby's most famous creations include:

- **Captain America**
- **The Fantastic Four**
- **Iron Man**
- **Black Panther**
- **Doctor Doom**
- **The Silver Surfer**
- **Galactus**
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TOYOTA

Andrew Phung and Jamie Northan play heroes, villains and even lovers while spoofing their favourite action movies in Kill Hard. COURTESY BREANNA KENNEDY

Improv duo set show in the 'hood

COMEDY

Northeast flavour added to sendup of action flicks

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

> Any time you can make something relatable ... it's a home run.
> Andrew Phung

The typical hero of the Loose Moose improv show Kill Hard is named John Stryker.

Usually.

He's also former CCIS, but he's laying low working in the Leisure Centre.

Maybe.

He might also work at My Donair. Or he could be a janitor at Bishop McNally or Lester B. Pearson high school.

"Pearson. Pearson is way more John Stryker," laughs performer Andrew Phung. "He would walk into McNally and be like, 'There's nothing for me to clean here.'"

Kill Hard is a spoof of Phung and his performing partner Jamie Northan's favourite action movies. And they have a lot of favourites, from Jason Statham to Jackie Chan.

They have very few rules, and what rules they do have they try to throw out the window on stage. Although the show first premiered in Edmonton, for their Calgary shows they're setting the movies in Calgary's northeast, where they are from.

"It's perfect," said Northan, noting how northeast Calgary has become associated with more dangerous news headlines among his circle.

"If a shooting happens in, like, Brentwood, it says Brentwood. If it happens in the northeast, it says northeast shooting. Where in the northeast?"

The duo said the diversity of the area works in their favour.

"The ethnic characters we can do, they all just come from the northeast," said Phung. "It plays to our strength of the northeast as well, and any time you can make something relatable to the audience, it's a home run."

The average show begins, however, with the villain. Northan and Phung give the audience several options for what villain they'd like to see in the story, and base the rest of the show on what the audience picks.

The show also has a dedicated music and sound effects artist and — to truly pay homage to the '80s era of action flicks — they have on hand a keytar synth player.

The show takes place takes place at Loose Moose Theatre on March 18 and 19 at 10:30 p.m. For more information visit www.loosemoose.com.

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TransAlta hoping to inherit the wind

POWER

Southwestern Alberta's windy plains gold for green energy

TransAlta wind turbines at a wind farm near Pincher Creek, Alta., Wednesday. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

There are three things one can be assured of in the Pincher Creek area of southwestern Alberta — death, taxes and the wind will blow.

Windswept is the word often used to describe the region with its rolling hills, cattle ranches, farms and the Rocky Mountains to the west.

And it is the wind that's eliciting some optimism at a time when Canada is seeking to reduce its carbon footprint and turn to alternative energy sources.

With their giant 80-metre-high turbines stretching as far as the eye can see and 45-metre-long blades turning gracefully in the breeze, wind farms are potentially a big beneficiary of changes promised by both the Alberta and federal governments.

"The wind is always blowing in southern Alberta it seems. For the locals who have grown up around the wind from childhood, it's just another day for them," said Wayne Oliver, TransAlta's operations supervisor for the region, which includes Fort Macleod.

"We have a long-term, viable resource in the quantity of wind that blows through southern Alberta," Oliver said.

"Until we get to the point that we'd have large-scale battery storage of wind energy, wind is always going to be supplemental to a base power load structure," he added. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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WEEKEND EVENTS

FRIDAY — ACAD Student Spring Show and Sale
More than 200 student artists will showcase more than 4,000 pieces of work. From paintings to sculptures to ceramics, each piece is handmade by ACAD students.

The event takes place at the Alberta College of Art and Design from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

SATURDAY — The Grape Escape
A chance to try beverages from all over the world.

Wine, spirits and beer will be available for sampling. In-house sommelier guides will advise guests on wine pairing with food samples.

The Grape Escape takes place at Stampede Park from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

SATURDAY — Calgary Earth Hour
The worldwide movement is being celebrated downtown for the second year in a row.

Several buildings will power down. Open Streets Calgary will set up pedal-powered lights, BassBus will provide music and lion dancers from the Jing Wo Cultural Association will perform. It all takes place at St. Patrick's Island from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY — Outdoor and Travel Show
Just in time for the first day of spring, the travel show brings hundreds of exhibitors offering deals on outdoor adventuring gear, travel experiences and kayaking equipment. There are also photography workshops and speakers.

The event takes place at the BMO Centre from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

AARON CHATHA/METRO

Vivek Shraya's first poetry book started as a response to the lack of diversity in the Toronto arts scene. COURTESY VIVEK SHRAYA

Freed from the melody

READING

Songwriter Vivek Shraya's book of poetry takes on race

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

Alberta-born but Toronto-based singer-songwriter Vivek Shraya has worked with artists such as Tegan and Sara, Dragonette and Melanie C. She's reading from her first book of poetry at Shelf Life Books on April 25.

Why a book of poetry?

Coming to poetry with this book was a bit of a new experience for me. I really wanted to make a project that talked about racism, and poetry felt like a really good medium to do it because, with poetry, you don't have to provide answers. You can use the language very creatively, as raw, direct or abstract as you want.

How does poetry differ from writing music?

With songwriting, it's very much tied to melody to me. Usually I start with melody and go from there, and the words are tied to the melody. With poetry, there is a musicality to it, but you're not limited in the same structure.

Why the title, Even This Page Is White?

I think I was on social media and I saw the announcement of another all-white panel or all-white literary event, or something where everybody part of the announcement was white. So I was kind of annoyed and frustrated with this experience, because every time I see something like that, it's hard for it not to feel personal. But I do think, in the arts world, we can do a lot better.

I ended up using that line when I wrote my first poem.

How have other performing artists inspired your work?

To cite Tegan and Sara, who are also from Alberta, in the ways I've been very inspired by their queerness and being out in their art, I think they have been inspired by the work I do in terms of its connection to being racialized. Sara's actually in Even This Page Is White alongside a number of different white artists I've worked with.

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RETIREMENT AGE

Canada sticking to 65

Canada will keep its retirement age at 65, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says.

The Stephen Harper Conservative government had planned to raise the retirement age to 67, but Trudeau said that this won't be happening in next week's budget.

"Tweaking the age like that is a very simplistic solution — that won't work — to a complex problem," Trudeau said on Thursday morning in a question and answer interview with Bloomberg News in New York.

Trudeau said he prefers a "nuanced and responsible discussion" about retirement, arguing that investment bankers and lawyers don't put their bodies through the same physical strains as manual labourers. He defended his plans to invest in the middle class and said he's not worried about driving the wealthy out of the country.

"We have nothing against success in Canada," Trudeau said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

> Tweaking the age like that is a very simplistic solution — that won't work — to a complex problem.
> Prime Minister Trudeau

Trudeau tricky on Trump

NEW YORK

PM deftly skates around offering a real opinion of The Donald

Americans got to witness a Canadian visitor this week immersed in an activity his nation prides itself on having mastered: stickhandling. The person performing the pivots was Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The subject he repeatedly skated around: Donald Trump.

The prime minister was asked repeatedly during his visit to New York this week and in Washington last week what he thinks of the Trump phenomenon. He has answered each time without specifically mentioning the billionaire's name.

"I have tremendous confidence in Americans' capacity to get the right result through their electoral system," he said Thursday, echoing previous responses.

Later, he alluded to the U.S. election before a high-powered crowd. After receiving an award from a women's group at the Waldorf Astoria hotel, he said the reason he was able to introduce progressive policies like a gender-parity cabinet and welcome refugees was because his approach had won with voters.

"As much as I was able to do, and my government was able to do, we only did it because Canadians made a choice: to choose a more open, fair, positive way of doing politics," he told the ballroom crowd, which included the heads of McDonald's, Campbell Soup, Shell, and the Carnival Corp.

He added, dryly: "That is certainly something that I hope resonates through political systems around the world."

That last line prompted laughter and perhaps his loudest applause of the evening — louder even than his references to the gender-parity cabinet, which is why he was invited to the gala and given the award from the women's group Catalyst.

Amid the claps, he added: "I'm not thinking of any place in particular!"

Several former Canadian ambassadors to the U.S. have publicly warned the prime minister not to talk about the U.S. election, saying it would be a mistake to turn Canada into an issue in a messy election.

Trudeau's appearances before heading home later Thursday included an interview at Bloomberg, owned by Trump critic and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg. Bloomberg wrote a laudatory piece about Trudeau this week headlined, Canada's New Hope.

There, he was asked again about what he would do if Trump becomes president. Trudeau replied that he understood why people were angry in many countries about the current political and economic systems and explained that he's working on democratic reforms and economic policies aimed at empowering frustrated voters.

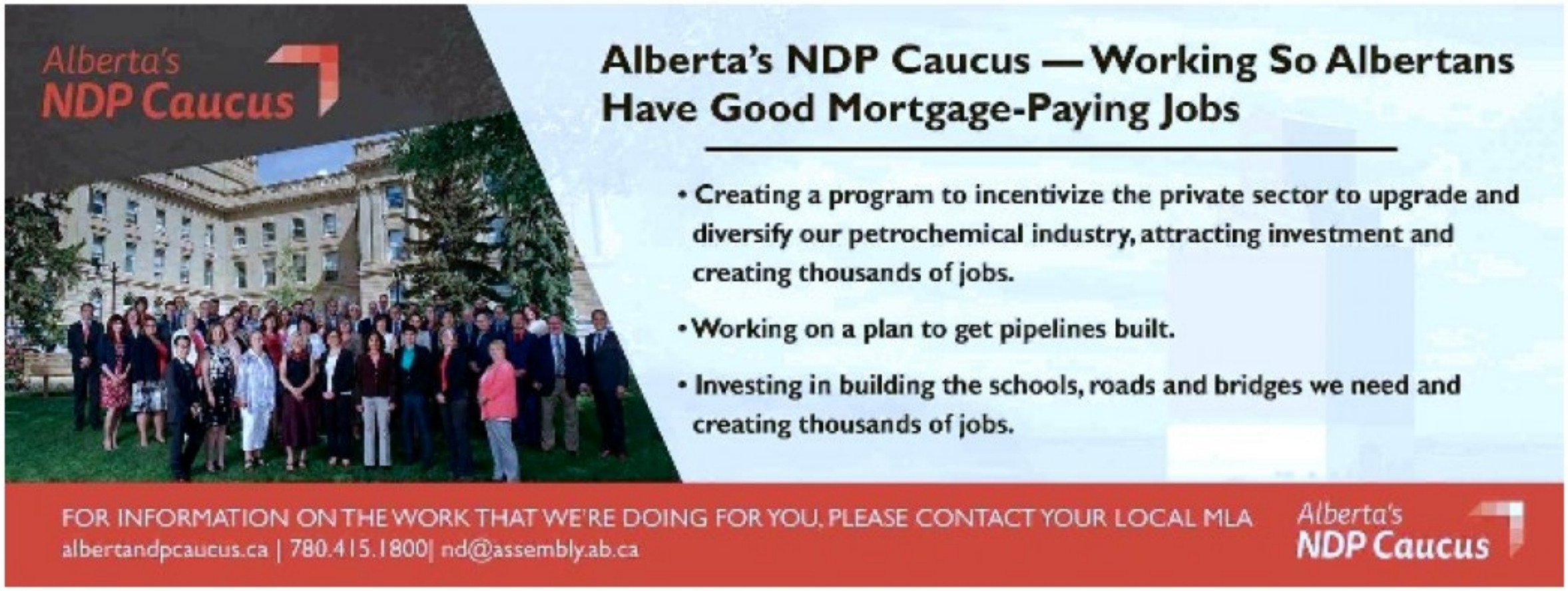
With respect to a president Trump, he said he'd work on areas where they shared common ground. The interviewer pressed him — what possible common ground could the Canadian progressive find with an American Republican talking about walls and ripping up trade deals and banning Muslim visitors to the U.S.?

Trudeau replied: "A desire to see Americans do well. A desire to see citizens in our countries to have better jobs and greater opportunities."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau takes part in an interview at Bloomberg headquarters in New York. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump addresses a press conference on March 15. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Lefty, who is homeless, sits on a sidewalk in Thunder Bay this month. He joins other homeless people at Shelter House for meals and a bed. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

OTTAWA

RCMP tragedy on Parliament Hill

Emma Jackson
Lucy Scholey
Metro | Ottawa

An RCMP officer has died after apparently shooting himself Thursday morning in a Sparks Street building just steps from Parliament Hill and less than a block away from the prime minister's Langevin Block office, sources say.

Ottawa police — who have yet to confirm those details — said their officers rushed to the scene for a "medical call."

Const. Marc Soucy said the call came in at 8:55 a.m. for an emergency at 90 Sparks St., the Thomas D'Arcy McGee Building. He would only say a person had been taken to hospital.

Up to 10 police vehicles were positioned around the building, which borders Metcalfe, Queen and Sparks streets.

The RCMP later tweeted the force had lost one of its own.

Paramedics spokesperson JP Trottier said his team "responded to a call near that area earlier this morning" and a person was taken to hospital.

He wouldn't comment on the person's injuries, saying the investigation is in the hands of the police.

Police also cordoned off the Metcalfe side of the building, at number 33.

An investigator took photos of the side entrance and an RCMP vehicle that was parked on scene. Eventually, a tow truck picked up that car.

Ottawa Police Chief Charles Bordeleau pulled up on the Metcalfe side of the building in a white SUV.

He got out and shook hands with the two RCMP officers and OPS officer before driving off without speaking to the media.

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

Housing vows good: Minister

POVERTY

Census on homelessness a reminder of campaign

$1.7 billion

The campaign promise made by the Liberals before their election to government, for social infrastructure such as shelters and affordable housing.

The federal Liberals have no interest in backing away from an election promise to spend more on affordable housing, says Status of Women Minister Patty Hajdu.

As communities across Canada engage in the first-ever federally organized and detailed census of homelessness, pressure on the government to act is mounting as community leaders better understand the stubbornness of the problem.

The Liberals have vowed to spend $20 billion over the next 10 years on what the party calls "social" infrastructure, which includes shelters and affordable housing, as part of a broader commitment to infrastructure spending that was a central component of the party's election platform.

The details of how much the government will spend in the sector next year will be outlined in next week's budget.

The promised money has raised hopes that places like Thunder Bay, which Hajdu represents, will turn the corner on a chronic battle with poverty and homelessness. The homeless count revealed 17 homeless people died there last year.

Hajdu says the money should begin to cut long waiting lists for affordable housing.

"And those waiting lists as they reduce, will alleviate the incredible burden on all of these largely not-for-profit organizations that are making do with a partial funding model of government money and fundraising money and donations," Hajdu said in a recent interview.

Next week's budget, the first for the Liberals since they took office after the October election, is expected to detail how much of the extra infrastructure money will be available to communities and how they can use it. The Liberals' campaign promise was for an extra $5.1 billion in infrastructure spending this year. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The men's dorm at Shelter House in Thunder Bay, Ont. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Cuba, U.S. and Canada in between

The coming week is historic for Cubans and Americans, starting with U.S. President Back Obama's two-day visit to Havana on Monday and Tuesday — the first by a U.S. president since 1928.

Spotlight on CUBA

Stephen Kimber

In the spring of 2013, U.S. and Cuban negotiators needed a neutral location for secret talks that would lead — 18 months later— to the stunning, Dec. 17, 2014, announcement the world's two "closest of enemies" were re-establishing relations. The only thing they could agree on initially, however, was that those talks should take place in friendly-with-both Canada.

Now, ahead of U.S. President Barack Obama's historic visit to Cuba, it's worth asking what the fast evolving relationship between Washington and Havana — which we helped, in our modest way, to facilitate — will mean for the future of our own historic ties with Cuba.

After Fidel Castro's revolution triumphed in 1959, Canada was one of the few western nations to maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba. In 1976, then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau became the first NATO leader to visit.

For Canada, that visit became a symbolic moment in our quest for an elusive, independent "third-way" foreign policy, untethered to the United States or Great Britain. For Cuba, it was an important symbolic moment too — international recognition of its legitimate place in the world. "Viva Cuba!" Trudeau declared.

The visit had another far-reaching consequence too. Pierre and Fidel became such warm personal friends that, in 2000, the Cuban leader — by then ailing himself — flew to Montreal to serve as an honorary pallbearer at Trudeau's state funeral.

Although relations iced over during the Harper era — his Conservative government opposed Cuba's mere presence at events like the Summit of the Americas — the Cubans did not easily forget Canada had been its friend when others were not. In 2010, during Canada's unsuccessful bid for a seat on the UN Security Council, Cuban diplomats even openly lobbied on our behalf with their Latin American counterparts.

Thanks to the 55-year-old American embargo, which has effectively prevented Americans from trading with — or traveling to — Cuba, and to the 1990s collapse of Cuba's Soviet bloc benefactors, Canada has had unparalleled access to the Caribbean island nation.

Calgary's Sherritt International — which boasts mining, oil-and-gas and electricity interests there — is now Cuba's largest foreign investor. And the one-million sun-seeking Canadians who fly south every winter to enjoy the island represent Cuba's largest source of foreign tourists.

With American businesses and individuals eager to share Cuba's long forbidden fruit, Canada's role in Cuba will inevitably diminish. But it's worth reminding ourselves of that sweet 2010 moment at the United Nations when Cuba unexpectedly stood up for us. "You can trust Canada," Cuba's ambassador, Pedro Nunez Mosquera, told his fellow diplomats.

Cubans do have long memories, and they won't quickly forget who their friends are.

Stephen Kimber is the author of nine books, including What Lies Across the Water: The Real Story of the Cuban Five, and a columnist at Metro Halifax

> **You can trust Canada.**
> Cuban Ambassador Pedro Nunez Mosquera, in 2010

Cuban President Fidel Castro and Pierre and Margaret Trudeau look over a photo album during the Trudeaus' 1976 state visit to Cuba. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

TRADE

Cuba, U.S. to discuss embargo

Cuba's government said Thursday it plans to do away with a penalty on converting U.S. dollars, but warned the Obama administration not to expect more changes until the U.S. trade embargo is lifted.

Three days before President Barack Obama visits the island, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez dismissed Obama's lofty rhetoric about using his visit to speak directly to the Cuban people about their future. In a stern and lengthy speech in Havana, he put Obama on notice that any attempt to circumvent the Cuban government by lobbying Cubans directly would not be warmly received.

"Various U.S. officials have declared in recent hours that the objective of Obama's measures is empowering the Cuban people. The Cuban people empowered themselves decades ago," Rodriguez said, referring to the 1959 revolution that put the current Cuban government in power.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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VILLAGE HONDA

Yazidis, their family displaced by ISIS attacks, stand in their temporary home in Zakho, northern Iraq. GETTY IMAGES

Kerry: 'ISIL is genocidal'

MIDDLE EAST

Declaration made official by congressional deadline

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry speaks to the media at the State Department. J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Obama administration on Thursday formally concluded the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is committing genocide against Christians and other minorities in Iraq and Syria, a declaration long sought by Congress and human rights organizations but likely to change little in the conflict against the extremists.

The determination, for which Congress had set a Thursday deadline, does not obligate the United States to take additional action against ISIL militants and does not prejudge any potential prosecution against its members.

Officials said the U.S. has already intensified its fight against ISIL and had effectively recognized the situation as a genocide more than a year ago when it agreed to increase the number of refugees, notably from Syria, that America accepts.

A day after the State Department said the administration would miss the deadline because it needed more evidence, Kerry said Thursday that he had completed his review after all and determined that Christians, Yazidis and Shiite groups are victims of genocide and crimes against humanity by the Islamic State.

Kerry outlined a litany of atrocities that he said the militants had committed against people and religious sites.

Using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group, he said, "Daesh (ISIL) is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions — in what it says, what it believes and what it does."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

First Puerto Rican woman with Zika has healthy baby

Officials in Puerto Rico say the first pregnant woman on the island infected with Zika has given birth to a healthy baby. The mosquito-borne virus has been linked to microcephaly.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

France recreates terror attacks to prevent more

French lawmakers leading an investigation into the deadly Nov. 13 attacks in Paris and some first responders at the Bataclan concert hall that night staged a re-enactment Thursday of the horror that left 130 people dead across the capital. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

REFUGEE CRISIS

EU closes in on migrant deal with Turkey

European leaders struggled Thursday to reach a deal that balanced their concerns about legal protections for refugees and Turkey's human rights record with their desperate need to resolve the migrant crisis.

On the table was a tentative plan to send back to Turkey tens of thousands of would-be asylum seekers who set out by boat for the Greek islands, in exchange for concessions that would reward Ankara with billions of dollars in aid, unprecedented visa access to Europe and promises of faster European Union membership talks.

Human rights groups and leading EU legislators decried the plan as a cynical cave-in, sacrificing universal rights to pander to a restless electorate fed up with hosting people who are fleeing war and poverty.

Even some leaders acknowledged the EU was walking a tightrope.

"It is on the edge of international law," Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite said of the outline deal that the 28-nation bloc hopes to sign off on before putting it up for approval to Turkey on Friday.

> **"I refuse to accept negotiations that sometimes resemble a form of blackmail.** Belgian PM Charles Michel

Some also criticized Turkey, which hosts 2.7 million refugees, complaining it was cynically trying to exploit the situation to win concessions well beyond its reach under normal circumstances.

"Turkey is really asking for a lot. I refuse to accept negotiations that sometimes resemble a form of blackmail," said Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel.

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SHARING ECONOMY

B.C. hot spot cracks down on Airbnb

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

One of B.C.'s hottest tourism destinations plans to crack down on unlicensed nightly home rentals on websites such as Airbnb in a bid to improve affordability and housing availability for long-term residents.

District of Tofino councillors voted this week to enforce regulations and educate people immediately about and surrounding bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals, which have flourished since Airbnb entered the scene two to three years ago.

During the same time, rents went up and long-term rentals became harder to find, according to the motion by Tofino Mayor Josie Osborne.

Home rentals have been allowed in Tofino for a decade if the owner gets a business licence — these cost up to $375 — but this rule is often ignored and is only enforced on a complaint basis, Osborne said.

Council is concerned Airbnb listings take apartments off the market for seasonal tourism workers in the hot spot that was featured in the New York Times twice last year.

In focus groups conducted by the district, they found that short-term rentals are "critical" for property owners to be able to afford to buy in Tofino in the first place. Tofino's population was 1,876 in the 2011 census. But anecdotal evidence has made council suspicious that the conversion of long-term rentals to short-term rentals is leading to evictions and higher rents, Osborne said.

> The priority concern is it could be soaking up rental housing.
> Coun. Geoff Meggs

Vancouver is expecting staff to report back this fall on how to handle Airbnb, Coun. Geoff Meggs said. "The priority concern is it could be soaking up rental housing," he said, adding public safety is also a concern.

IMPORTS

Liberals under pressure to raise duty-exempt limit

With its maiden budget just days away, the new Liberal government is facing pressure to bump up Canada's duty-exemption limit from its current level of $20 for products shipped or mailed from abroad.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Pet clothing sales feel chill of milder winter

RETAIL

Companies forced to lay off employees and cut prices

An unseasonably warm winter in Eastern Canada and a weak economy have taken a big bite out of sales from businesses that cater to furry best friends, the pet products industry says.

"For us, it's a big hurt," said Marianne Bertrand, owner of Muttluks. The Toronto-based company estimates that sales of doggie coats and boots have slipped by more than 30 per cent this winter.

Muttluks, whose boots were recently given to U.S. President Barack Obama's dogs by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during his state visit, was forced to lay off about a dozen employees when it prematurely shut production late last year.

Montreal pet store Doghaus said the warm winter prompted it to slash its prices in half and it plans to offer even deeper discounts to help clear inventory.

"It wasn't a wasteland or anything, but it definitely was lighter than other years," said manager Sarah Miller-Barrington.

Industry surveys have suggested that most pet owners are willing to spend extra for the best products available, including food, even if they are more expensive.

Like many of her customers, Miller-Barrington says she tends to "mother" her eight-year-old Shetland Sheepdog named Fergus, even though his heavy fur coat protects him from the elements.

Sarah and her dog Fergus in the Doghaus pet supply store in Montreal. An unseasonably warm winter in Eastern Canada and a weak economy have taken a big bite out of sales from businesses that cater to furry best friends, the pet products industry says. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Just as parents outfit their children for the cold, many people feel the same obligation to their pets, she added. Others simply view it as an opportunity to make a fashion statement by finding a fun new dog coat each year.

K9 Excel owner Johanne Beaulieu said she hasn't seen this level of sales decline in the six years she's operated the Montreal store and website, which sells clothes, boots, and dog diapers.

$7 billion

What the pet business is worth annually, including food, clothing, accessories and trips to the vet, according to the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council of Canada.

Buyers aren't just the wealthy — they come from all walks of life, Beaulieu said.

"It's people for whom an animal is their baby," she said.

A weaker economy, especially in Western Canada, has also contributed to diminished sales of pet products, says Louis McCann, CEO of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council of Canada.

Clothing and boots are highly dependent on weather but the health of the economy plays a more important role in purchasing decisions, he said.

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2 PETase breaks down PET into a smaller molecule called MHET

MHET MHET MHET MHET

1 Bacteria makes enzymes (proteins that break things down).

Enzyme #1 PETase, which breaks down PET

Enzyme #2 MHETase, which breaks down MHET

3 MHETase breaks down MHET into two environmentally friendlier chemicals, TPA and EG.

4 Bacteria further breaks down EG and TPA into food for its carbon and energy needs. Yum!

TPA (terephthalic acid)

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BRILLIANT IDEONELLA Scientists from Keio University in Tokyo slogged through the sludge at a PET recycling yard and found a strain of bacteria previously unknown to science: **Ideonella sakaiensis 201-F6.** It evolved to use plastic as a source of food. It can break down a thin, 60 mg film of PET in six weeks at 30 C, turning it into two chemicals that are relatively environmentally benign. The process is still too slow to apply on an industrial scale, but this is a start.

GRAPHICS BY ANDRÉS PLANA/METRO

CITIZEN SCIENTIST by Genna Buck

Do chimpanzees believe in God?

QUESTION
Whoa. Chimps build shrines? Does this mean humans aren't the only species with religion? — Colin, Toronto

You know, Colin, it wouldn't surprise me. Chimpanzees have been observed using tools, warring among rival groups and dancing in the rain. They're known to practise a sort of communal chilling-out after meals that's been compared to gathering for worship.

However, I don't think there's conclusive evidence of chimp spirituality in the recent Nature paper you're talking about. It describes chimps caught on camera repeatedly and deliberately hurling rocks at trees and leaving distinctive stone piles (shrines?) around the forest. It didn't seem to be a mating ritual. It wasn't about food. There was no obvious evolutionary reason for it at all. The authors suggested it *could* be symbolic, or even sacred.

But very careful further study is needed, I think, because researchers have to fight the tendency we all have to *anthropomorphize*, or ascribe human characteristics to non-humans. It's one of our powerful cognitive biases (in-born patterns of flawed reasoning).

That said, this study made me think of a conference I went to where psychiatrist Martin Brüne presented findings about a possible PTSD-like syndrome in chimpanzees.

Brüne showed a video of a retired research chimp curled into a ball, rocking back and forth and hitting himself, much like I'd once seen a child with autism do, mid-tantrum. It looked eerily human.

The moderator said chimps continually exceeded his expectations: He always found they were more smart, more complex and more self-aware than he'd thought.

So I'd be open to the idea that our closest living relatives are into human-like things, such as prayer.

But we need to see more evidence first.

FINDINGS
Your week in science

Dengue vaccine
Doctors at Johns Hopkins University have announced a 100-per-cent successful clinical trial of a vaccine for dengue, one of the most common — and most feared— mosquito-borne diseases on Earth. (It's not called "bone-break fever" for no reason).

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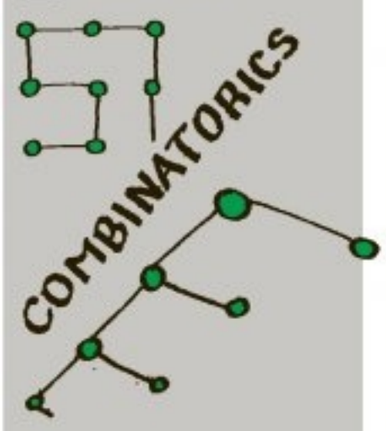

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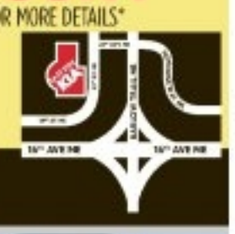

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MOVIES GOSSIP TELEVISION DIGITAL

Where are all the movie stars?

ANALYSIS

Marketing trumps man in today's big studio films

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Where have all the movie stars gone?

Once upon a time big names on even bigger marquees were as close to a guarantee of good box office as one gets in the movie biz. But no more.

This weekend The Divergent Series: Allegiant, the third part of the young adult series, hit theatres. Based on the successful books, it stars Shailene Woodley and Theo James in a teen epic about dystopia, guilt and artfully tossed pixie haircuts.

In the new film the pair risk it all to go beyond the walls of their shattered city to discover the truth about their troubled world.

Woodley and James are appealing performers and despite having chiselled cheekbones and earning accolades (they won the Teen Choice Award for best liplock in Insurgent and Woodley was a Golden Globe nominee for The Descendants), no one is going to see Allegiant because they're in it.

Why? Because they're not movie stars — they're brand ambassadors.

The movie's brand is bigger than they are and that's the draw.

Young adult movies like Twilight made Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart famous and superhero films reignited Robert Downey Jr.'s career and turned Chris Hemsworth into a sex symbol, but none of these actors have scored recent hits outside of their best-known brands.

These days the marketing is more important than the movie star.

It's almost a throwback to the very early days of cinema when actors weren't given billing or publicized for the films they made.

Fearing performers would demand larger paycheques if they became popular, the studios gave them nicknames instead.

Hamilton, Ont.-born Florence Lawrence was known as the Biograph Girl, named after the studio that produced her films, but with the release of The Broken Oath in 1910 became the first entertainer to have her name appear in the credits of a film.

Floodgates opened, soon names like Mary Pickford (another Biograph Girl), Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin festooned not only movie credits but posters as well, usually above the title.

The studios seized the marketing value of their actors and for years the star system was a money-spinner.

These stars were so powerful they not only sold tickets by the fistful but also influenced contemporary trends.

For instance, it's rumoured that sales of men's undershirts plummeted in 1934 when The King of Hollywood, Clark Gable, was seen without one in It Happened One Night.

As the legend goes, sales took such a hit several undergarment manufacturers tried, unsuccessfully, to sue Columbia Pictures for damages.

For decades stars ruled supreme at the box office, but the business has changed. I'm guessing the movie studios love it because no film brand ever asked for more money or a bigger trailer.

Certainly Tom Cruise can still sell a ticket or three, but only if his movie has the words Mission Impossible in the title and Matt Damon was brought back in to add star sparkle to the new Jason Bourne movie after a lackluster reboot with Jeremy Renner. Jennifer Lawrence is a movie star. Her latest film Joy, the empowering story of a woman and her mop, wasn't a big hit but without her star power would likely never have been made at all.

But former sure bets like Will Smith, Johnny Depp and Angelina Jolie cannot always be counted on for big returns.

It's not just the movie business's attitude toward fame that has changed, it's also ours.

Today a proliferation of YouTube superstars and social media has democratized fame and in a world and business where everyone is famous, no one truly is, not even the stars of a blockbuster such as The Divergent Series: Allegiant.

The Divergent Series is proof you don't need big names if you've got a big brand. CONTRIBUTED

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

The Divergent Series: Allegiant Part 1	★★
The Program	★★
Chi-Raq	★★★★
Knight of Cups	★

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On being a nerd and indie film roles

DIVERGENT

Zoe Kravitz talks musical theatre and her acting gigs

Ned Ehrbar
Metro | Hollywood

Zoe Kravitz is gearing up for one more Divergent film after this latest instalment, Allegiant, hits theatres. But she might be able to squeeze in another hip indie — like last year's Dope — before heading back to finish off the YA dystopian series.

You are three movies into a four-movie series. How do you approach this section?
Yeah, it's interesting, it's kind of like going home again. I feel like I know this character so well now that, I know how she reacts to things, I know how I want her to evolve. But then you read the script and you go, "OK, this is a moment. How do I make that part of her come through?" I feel like that's where the work comes in.

What were some of those moments for this one?
I actually really enjoyed how quiet she is in this film. I think there was a lot of angst in her in the first film, but there was an immaturity there. Now so much has gone on, there's been real loss, real death, real killing, real revolution, so I think it's kind of shut her up in a really interesting way, where she's focused.

Do you know what happens going forward?
Yeah, I read the books, but I try not to dwell on it because once we've gotten the script that has got to be your focus, because you can't dwell on the things that aren't in there, you know what I mean? You're kind of like "OK, this is now what we're working with."

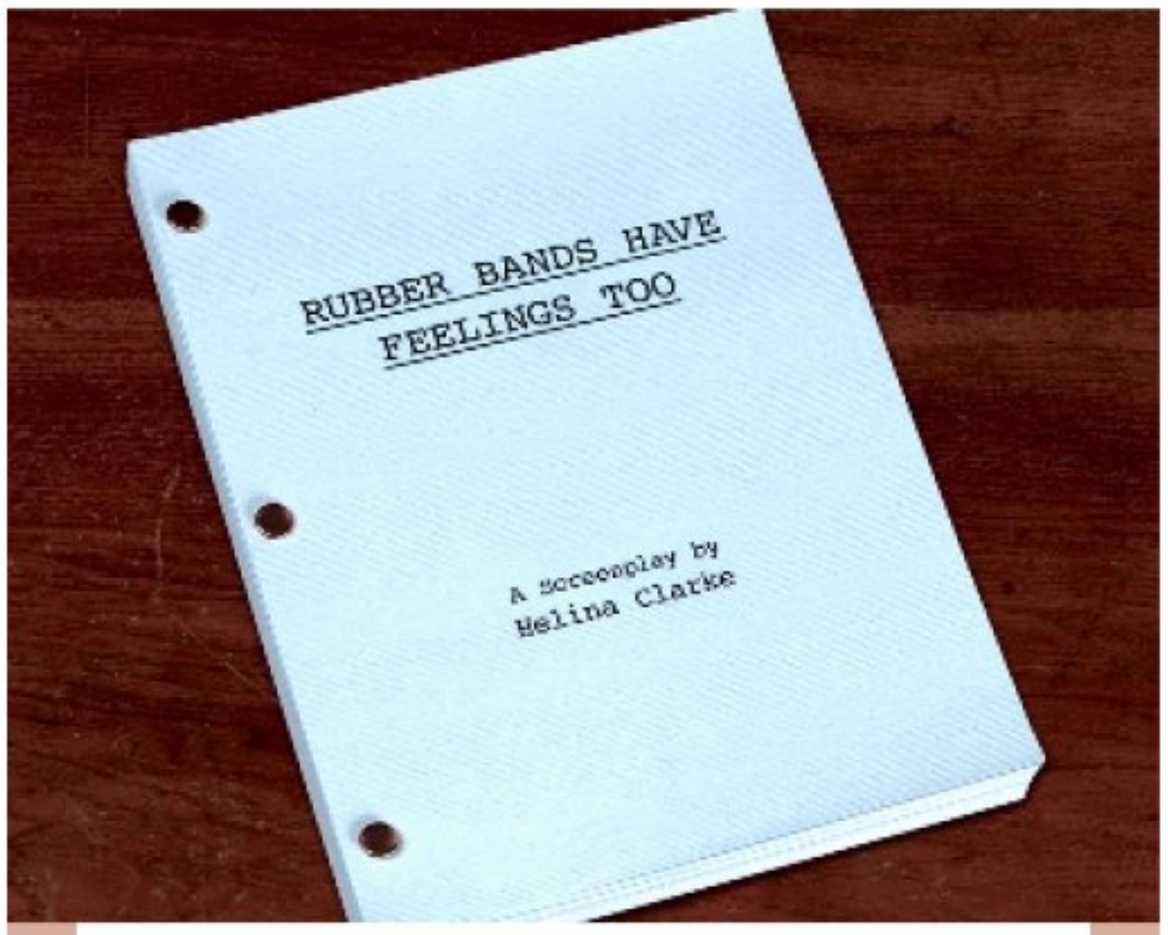
This is such a gigantic cast. Is there a lot of downtime?
I guess there's chunks of time where you're not working. But the thing is that for the most part, everyone's around, you know what I mean? So even though you're not featured in that scene, you're probably somewhere in the room because it's kind of focused on this group of people. So there's actually a lot of times of being in the scene but just kind of being there because you'd be there. There's a lot of standing around, but on camera.

Shailene Woodley (Tris, left) and Zoë Kravitz (Christina) star in The Divergent Series: Allegiant.
CONTRIBUTED

You go between these massive franchises and very interesting smaller films. How do you navigate that?
It's about if the story reflects something that I feel like I haven't seen or want to see more of or want to be a part of. It doesn't really come down to, "OK, I'm gonna do a really cool indie film, and I'm gonna do a big franchise film," you know? Mad Max, I loved the story. Divergent, I loved the story. Dope, I loved the story.

You've described yourself as a nerd. Why?
I'm a very nerdy person. Acting for me came from musical theatre, which some people might not think is nerdy. But it was not the coolest group of kids at school, it just never is. In all of the schools that I ever went to, that was my crew. I was in every play that I could get near and always singing in three-part harmony with my friends. I have that very campy part of myself. I was not the coolest kid in school, so I consider myself a nerd.

But nerds have really come into their own.
Yeah, I think people are beginning to not only accept but be intrigued by the less obvious things in life. It's not that we're less nerdy, we just don't care as much. Or people are not so quick to judge, hopefully. Nerds are more interesting, right? The reason you're considered a "nerd" is because you're not doing what everyone else is doing.



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INTERVIEW

Divergent author loves meeting fans

Divergent author Veronica Roth won't have to travel far to attend this year's BookCon.

Roth is a native of Chicago, the setting for the third annual fan-based, pop-culture publishing event, the book world's version of Comic-Con. BookCon will be held May 14 at McCormick Place, with featured speakers also including Samantha Bee, Sherman Alexie and Richelle Mead.

"I'm fierce in my love for Chicago, and it's a great place for books, so hopefully my author peers are seduced by its wonderfulness and decide to move here," she wrote in a recent email interview.

As in previous years, BookCon immediately follows BookExpo America, the publishing industry's annual convention and trade show. Thousands of young people attended BookCon in 2014 and 2015 when the event was held in New York, and Roth said she was excited to meet some of her fans.

"For me, it's important to connect with the people who are reading my books, particularly the younger ones," she wrote. "It reminds me why it's important to write stories for them, and about them. They are wonderfully complex, enthusiastic people, and what they share with me in person ... is an essential part of what makes writing meaningful to me." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Veronica Roth attends the premiere of Allegiant in New York on Monday. Roth will attend the third annual fan-based, pop-culture publishing event, BookCon, on May 14 in Chicago.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Spike Lee's take on gang violence

Lysistrata (Teyonah Parris) is the woman who leads the move to withhold sex from men in Chicago's South Side until the gun violence stops in Spike Lee's new joint Chi-Raq. CONTRIBUTED

INTERVIEW

Chi-Raq inspired by ancient Greek play

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

"The human spirit is a great thing," says director Spike Lee on what he learned while doing research for his new film. The director spent six months in South Side Chicago, "talking to people, meeting people, getting the lay of the land," before shooting a single frame of his anti-gang-violence movie Chi-Raq. "It was very important, not just meeting people, but people becoming comfortable with me. People opening up to me."

The movie draws its story about a neighbourhood woman who convinces the wives and girlfriends of gang members to withhold sex from their men until the guys agree to put down their weapons from a Greek play first performed in 411 BC, but details the very modern problem of gun violence.

"At the end of the movie in that scene where everybody is dressed in white," says Lee, "those women are not actresses. Those women are members of a group called Pain Over Purpose. They are mothers whose children, whose sons and daughters, have been shot down in the streets of Chicago. Those pictures they are holding up are pictures of their loved ones.

"The pain of a parent who has lost a child in any circumstance is something that no parent should have to go through. They all say that there is a hole in their spirit, in their soul, that will never be replaced. Many of those mothers have tried to commit suicide and had various other problems since then but they are holding strong."

The cycle of violence portrayed in the film and acted out for real on the streets — during Chi-Raq's 38-day filming schedule 331 people were wounded and shot, 65 people were murdered in Chicago — was personal for one of the movie's stars.

"Do you know Jennifer Hudson's history?" asks Lee. "It is known knowledge that Jennifer's mother, brother and nephew were murdered in Chicago. I think that's extra gravitas that you have with Jennifer Hudson in this film. This is not an act for her. She got hit directly by gun violence on the South Side of Chicago.

"I didn't want her to think that I was exploiting her. I knew I wanted her for the part but there was some length of time before I got the courage to approach her. Also, when we did meet I was babbling. She said, 'Spike, I know why you want me to do this film, so just stop. I'll do it.' I was trying to be sensitive and I turned out to just beat around the bush. I said, 'I'll just shut up and say thank you.'"

Lee is fearless in his handling of the material, taking chances narratively — the entire film is presented in verse — and visually, to tell the timely and hot-button story of a "self-inflicted genocide."

Finding the mix of heartfelt storytelling and satire, says Lee, was crucial to the success of the film.

"It is not an easy thing to do," he says.

Actor defends Lance Armstrong

FALLEN SPORTS HERO

Ben Foster had to learn about doping culture for role in film

After enduring an intense exercise regime, secretly using performance-enhancing drugs, and immersing himself in the world of Lance Armstrong to portray the cyclist on the big screen, Ben Foster was left with one feeling for the controversial athlete.

"Empathy," said the actor. "It was a complicated time. He's a complicated man."

It's a feeling Foster hopes audiences can also come away with after watching The Program, which tracks Armstrong's incredible cycling career and the behind-the-scenes doping that drove it.

OPENING IN CANADIAN CITIES
The Program opens in Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa, Vancouver and Montreal on Friday.

Armstrong, a cancer survivor and longtime athlete, was once an American sporting hero, but is now a divisive figure.

He has been banned from cycling for life and had his seven Tour de France titles stripped after telling Oprah Winfrey in a 2013 interview that he used performance-enhancing drugs.

Foster knew the bare-bones of Armstrong's story before making The Program, which was directed by British filmmaker Stephen Frears. But playing the athlete made him appreciate the broader culture of doping that existed in cycling at the time.

"He did doping better. He did nutrition better. He did the cycling gear better. He did training better. It's not about being a liar. If everybody's doping, everybody's lying," Foster said, noting that Armstrong also raised millions for cancer research over the course of his career.

"He treated people in a particular way that I don't necessarily agree with but the complexity of the good that he did, with the way that he did it, deserves a deeper consideration."

To properly capture Armstrong's intensity, Foster — unbeknownst to the rest of his cast, but under the supervision of a doctor — took performance-enhancing drugs himself and only revealed what he had done after filming had wrapped.

He also tried to reach out to Armstrong, but the athlete wasn't interested in talking.

Foster nonetheless describes himself as a fan of Armstrong's, saying he found himself defending the cyclist on the set of the film.

"We don't like that Lance didn't apologize in a way that felt sincere. And that's why we're punishing him still," he said. "I don't condone or condemn ... I think it's a complicated story." THE CANADIAN PRESS

ANOTHER TAKE

Lance fascinating person to watch, says O'Dowd

Chris O'Dowd, who plays David Walsh, an Irish journalist who worked to bring Armstrong's doping into the spotlight, agreed that the cyclist is a complex character and noted that the film attempts to provide a better picture of the intricacies of his world.

"He was an incredible athlete, very manipulative, vindictive, self-centred, very smart, and ego driven," he said. "I think he's a fascinating person to watch."

O'Dowd's personal feelings about Armstrong, however, tend to waver.

"At times I feel slightly sorry for him. But then I think of how he treated some people ... and I think, 'I don't know if he needs our sympathy,"' he said. "I think he's a fallen hero, but still a kind of hero."

Ben Foster stars as Lance Armstrong in The Program directed by Stephen Frears. CONTRIBUTED

> **[Lance Armstrong] treated people in a particular way that I don't necessarily agree with but the complexity of the good that he did, with the way that he did it, deserves a deeper consideration.**
> Ben Foster on the controversial sports hero

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THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

What the two actors express in brief glances is extraordinary, especially considering that De Sica cast non-professionals

The first time I ever had mozzarella in carrozza — a cheese and anchovy delight sandwiched between golden-crusted slices of fried bread — was at work. Over 10 years, I was a dish washer, coffee maker, server and eventually a floor manager at the original Terroni in Toronto — original because the southern Italian restaurant is now a mini-empire that includes not only a bakery and wine-importing arm but also two outposts in Los Angeles.

And the first time I ever saw mozzarella in carrozza outside of work was on screen in Neorealist Italian director Vittoria De Sica's Bicycle Thieves, one of the first films Simon and I ever watched together. The 1948 post-World War II film, which comes out on a new Criterion Blu-Ray special edition on March 29, is about a working class man, Antonio Ricci, who gets a job hanging posters on the caveat that he owns a bicycle. Ricci's wife pawns their bed linen in order to get Antonio's bike out of hock. Just as life looks sunnier for the young family, the bike is stolen. The rest of the film chronicles Antonio and his young son Bruno's quest for it in the gritty streets of Rome.

There's a single respite: seeing that Bruno is exhausted and disillusioned, Antonio offers to take him for a pizza with what little money he has left. As soon as they enter a restaurant, they (and the audience) know that everyone else is better-appointed then they are. It's not the type of place that serves pizza. So they order mozzarella in carrozza and a carafe of wine. Sweet Bruno, who barely knows how to use a knife and fork, eats his sandwich and drinks his wine with gusto. For a heart-breaking moment, they've not a trouble in the world.

THE MOVIE: Bicycle Thieves

THE MEAL: Mozzarella in carrozza

What the two actors, Lamberto Maggiorani and Enzo Staiola, express in brief glances — from desperation to exultation — is extraordinary, especially considering that De Sica cast non-professionals. (Maggiorani was a factory worker and Staiola was a neighbourhood boy who De Sica spotted from his car.)

Bicycle Thieves is, of course, political: it examines the social problems of postwar Italian reconstruction. But it's themes — including how our lives can feel both predetermined and full of chance — are universal. In 1999 Roger Ebert gave the film four stars on account of this: "it is a simple, powerful film about a man who needs a job," he wrote. "[It] had such an impact on its first release that when the British film magazine Sight & Sound held its first international poll of film makers and critics in 1952, it was voted the greatest film of all time."

After we recently re-watched it, we agreed the film was more impactful the second time around, particularly the ending when out of desperation Antonio steals a bike and is mobbed by an angry crowd while Bruno, in tears, watches on. The last shot, a tip of the hat to fellow director Charlie Chaplin, shows Antonio and Bruno dissolving into a crowd. "It's a perfect film," Simon said as we wiped our eyes. There weren't any other words. By chance, we recently walked into Terroni, the place where I passed from my twenties into my thirties and became something approximating an adult, and where, by chance, I first met Simon. And, by chance, there on the special's menu, was mozzarella in carrozza. Our eyes lit up.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.

FILM BRIEF

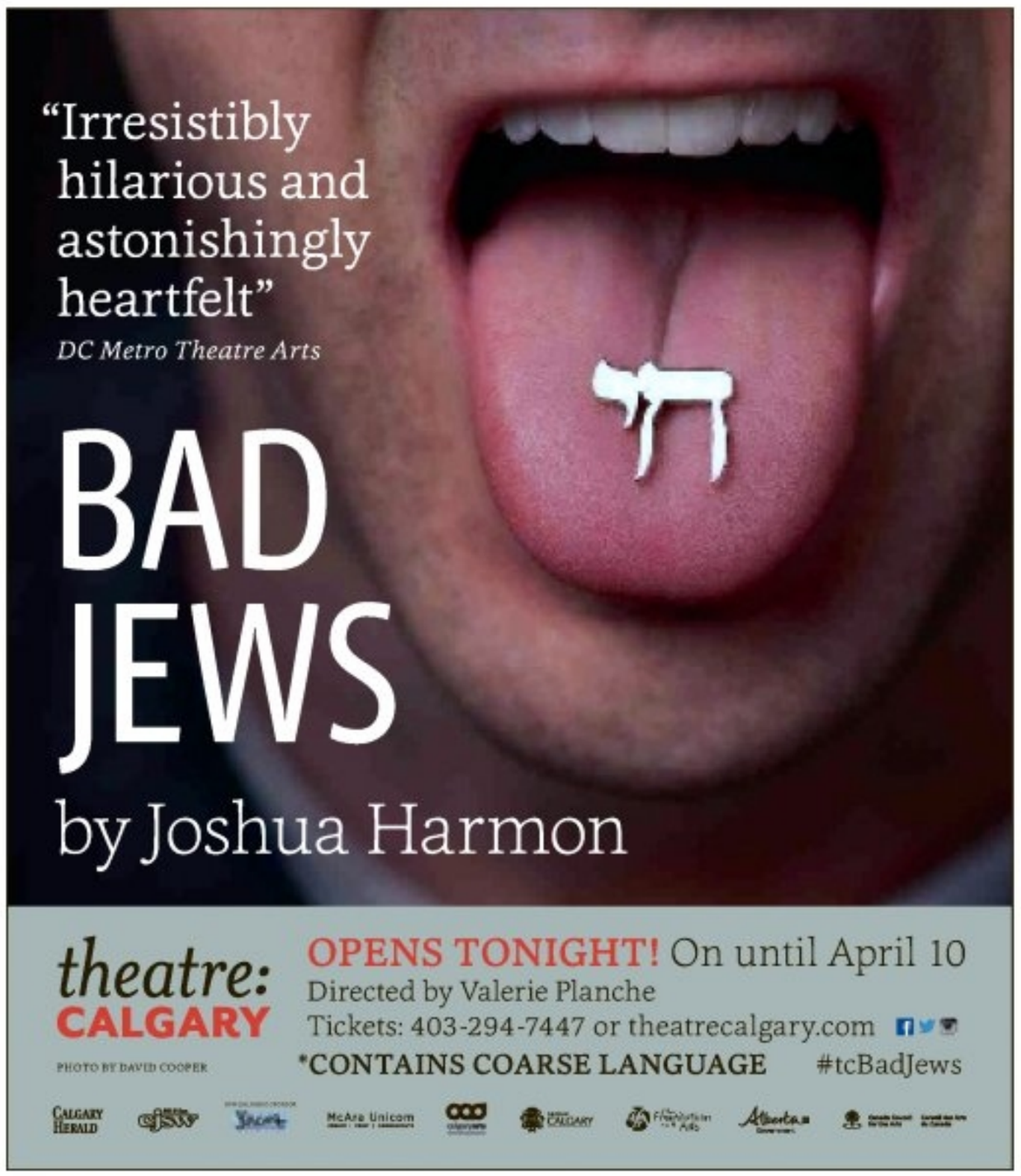
China-Tinseltown venture unveils a dozen new movies

A joint Hollywood and Chinese production house announced this week a slew of upcoming films, including an action-horror flick about a giant shark, as moviemakers increasingly look to tap into China's vast market.

The announcement in Hong Kong was made by Flagship Entertainment, a tie-up between Warner Brothers, China Media Capital and Hong Kong television broadcaster TVB and comes with Hollywood awash with constantly growing Chinese funding.

Flagship unveiled 12 new films. They include Meg, about the discovery of a gigantic ancestor of the great white shark, and Beautiful Coma, a romance co-produced by Hong Kong director Peter Chan and U.S. director Brett Ratner, who directed the Rush Hour franchise.

Other productions include a remake of Miss Congeniality and another comedy Mission Milano which stars popular Hong Kong actor Andy Lau. AFP



Divine line between preachy and box office

Jennifer Garner, left, Queen Latifah and Kylie Rogers in Miracles from Heaven. HANDOUT

BIG ON FAITH

Biblical blockbusters

Hollywood has a long history of Biblical blockbusters, from Cecil B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments to Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ to the currently playing Risen, also released by Affirm and starring Joseph Feinnes. But such big names haven't traditionally been drawn to the quieter God-related fare.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FAITH-BASED FILMS

Miracles From Heaven tones down religion, ups star power

For some filmgoers, hearing a movie described as "faith-based" makes it a must-see. But just as many others find the term a turn-off.

To reach audiences beyond the Christian church-goers that generally propel the genre, some producers of faith-based films are ramping up the star power and tamping down the evangelical messages.

The latest example is Miracles From Heaven, starring Jennifer Garner and Queen Latifah, which tells the true story of a nine-year-old Texas girl who inexplicably recovers from an incurable condition after surviving a 30-foot fall.

Among the film's producers are pastors T.D. Jakes and DeVon Franklin — the team behind 2014's $100 million hit Heaven is for Real — who say they aim to make movies for all audiences, not just religious ones.

> **I'm proud of growing up a little good churchgoing United Methodist girl and I'm so, so proud of the film.**
>
> Jennifer Garner says of Miracles From Heaven

"I think sometimes when people hear 'faith-based,' to them that is code for preachy, that is code for more medicine, and it's also sometimes code for lower quality, lower budgeted," Franklin said in a recent interview.

"It's the way people think when you use labels that is the barrier," Jakes said. "It's not necessarily the film, but the image that comes up in people's minds ... It suggests a discrimination that was not intended. We didn't do this film just for people of faith. We did this film for everybody."

Other entertainment aimed at Christian audiences, including new films The Young Messiah and God's Not Dead 2, and the live TV special The Passion (airing Sunday), take a more religious approach.

Miracles From Heaven is based on Christy Beam's 2015 memoir, which describes her family's struggles and her own crisis of faith when daughter Anna is diagnosed with an incurable digestive disorder, then has a potentially deadly fall. But following the mishap, Anna has no serious injuries and ultimately shows no signs of the disorder. She later tells her mom she went to heaven and talked to Jesus during the ordeal.

The film is being released Wednesday by Sony's Affirm Films, the studio's specialty faith division established in 2007.

Affirm also released Heaven is for Real, starring Greg Kinnear, which is similarly based on a parent's account of a child's divine experience. The film had a reported $12 million budget and made more than $100 million at the box office.

Paramount's Captive, released last fall, was a modest faith-based success. Also a true story, it stars David Oyelowo as Brian Nichols, an escaped murderer who takes a single mother (Kate Mara) hostage, then lets her go after she reads a Christian book to him. Despite mixed reviews, it more than doubled its small budget at the box office.

Marketing a film as faith-based means nothing if the content doesn't speak to religious audiences, said Maria Elena de Las Carreras, a professor of international cinema at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

"It's a label, but it's not magical. It doesn't guarantee box-office turnout," she said, citing Paramount's 2014 big-budget Biblical flop, Noah.

"Audiences flock to well-made films that deal with stories of optimism and renewal, even if there is suffering and there is loss," she said. "That was true in classic Hollywood cinema and it's true today."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Now playing

DRAMA

Miracles From Heaven

Director: Patricia Riggen
Starring: Jennifer Garner, Kylie Rogers

When Christy discovers her 10-year-old daughter Anna has an incurable disease, she becomes a ferocious advocate for her daughter's healing as she searches for a solution. After Anna has a freak accident, an extraordinary miracle unfolds.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 64% Audience: 78%

ACTION

The Divergent Series: Allegiant

Director: Robert Schwentke
Starring: Shailene Woodley, Theo James

After the earth-shattering revelations of Insurgent, Tris (Shailene Woodley) must escape with Four (Theo James) and go beyond the wall enclosing Chicago. For the first time ever, they will leave the only city and family they have ever known.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 18% Audience: +95%

DRAMA

The Program

Director: Stephen Frears
Starring: Ben Foster, Jesse Plemons

From Academy Award nominated director Stephen Frears (The Queen, Philomena) comes the true story of the meteoric rise and fall of one of the most celebrated and controversial men in recent history; Lance Armstrong.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 62% Audience: +86%

DRAMA/MYSTERY

10 Cloverfield Lane

Director: Dan Trachtenberg
Starring: Mary Elizabeth Winstead, John Goodman

A young woman wakes up after an accident to find that she's locked in a cellar with a doomsday prepper who insists that he saved her life and the world outside is uninhabitable following an apocalyptic catastrophe.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 90% Audience: 85%

DRAMA/COMEDY

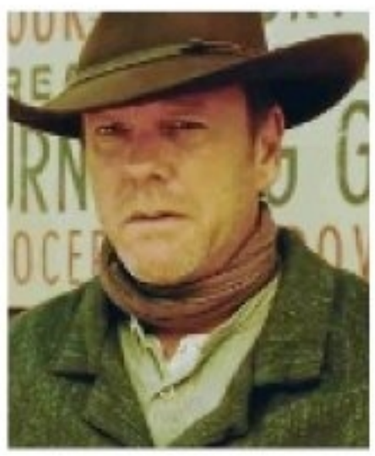
The Bronze

Director: Bryan Buckley
Starring: Melissa Rauch, Gary Cole

A decade ago, Hope Ann Greggory (Melissa Rauch) was America's sweetheart. Her inspired performance on a ruptured Achilles at the world's most prestigious gymnastics tournament clinched an unlikely bronze medal for the U.S. team and brought glory to her hometown of Amherst, Ohio.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 22% Audience: +63%



WESTERN

Forsaken

Director: Jon Cassar
Starring: Kiefer Sutherland, Donald Sutherland

In 1872, John Henry Clayton (Kiefer Sutherland) retires as a gunfighter and returns to his hometown of Fowler, Wyo. in hope of repairing his relationship with his estranged father, Rev. Clayton (Donald Sutherland). However, he soon learns that the town is in turmoil, as the railroad will be coming through the area.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 44% Audience: 98%

Esperanza wants you to meet Emily

NEW ALBUM

Jazz sensation is trying new sounds with her alter ego

Esperanza Spalding flowed across the stage as she played her fretless electric bass at Brooklyn's BRIC House, clad in her "crazy lava outfit" with a gold-feathered headdress and swirling red-and-black patterned pants.

The imagery fit the occasion as she sang Good Lava, the opening track of her new album Emily's D + Evolution, her first in four years. The song is a metaphor for the untapped creative energy that erupted from within when she discovered her alter ego named Emily, who inspired her to take her music in a new direction.

Supported by her power rock trio of electric guitarist Matthew Stevens, drummer Jason Tyson and three yellow-clad backup singers-dancers, Spalding turned her Brooklyn show into performance art using such props as a stack of books on Ebony and Ivy, which alludes to the historic links between elite American universities and the slave trade.

The Brooklyn concert was a preview before a world tour that started this month showcasing her new album, which marks her evolution as a singer-songwriter. It is less overtly jazz-related than her four previous solo releases. She doesn't play any acoustic bass or take solos.

"Emily is a name for a process ... when you sense that there's something pent up that you haven't been developing," said Spalding, 31, said at a cafe near her Brooklyn home. "It sometimes takes an eruption to open that up and that's a lot of what Emily does."

Her alter ego inspired Spalding to replace her trademark buoyant Afro with downward-pointing braids when performing, reflecting her desire to get in touch with "that fundamental ground floor of my expression." She also wears over-sized plastic-framed glasses onstage.

After hearing David Bowie's 2013 album The Next Day, Spalding contacted his long-time collaborator Tony Visconti, who was surprised to get a call asking him to co-produce the CD.

Visconti says that, like Bowie, Spalding is an artist willing to "break the mould all the time" rather than rest on past successes.

Esperanza Spalding says she's discovered her alter ego Emily, who inspired her to take her music in a new direction. CONTRIBUTED

"This is a very adventurous record," Visconti said in an interview. "This is showing people that you don't have to follow what's trendy."

For Spalding, the album reflects a conscious decision to reset a career that has enjoyed dizzying success since she upset Justin Bieber, Drake and Mumford & Sons to become the first jazz performer to win the best new artist Grammy in 2011. Cast as the next great hope for jazz, she performed at the White House and Academy Awards and did magazine fashion shoots.

Spalding says she felt "out of balance" after winning two Grammys in 2013 for Radio Music Society, on which she fused R&B, neo-soul and hip-hop with jazz.

"There wasn't enough time for me to do what's important to me — practice and study and play," she said.

Spalding decided to tour with other musicians, including an all-female acoustic jazz trio with pianist Geri Allen and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington. She first imagined the character of Emily in the early morning hours before her birthday in October 2013.

Emily is also Spalding's middle name, which she was known by growing up in Portland, Ore. As a child, she was interested in acting and movement, and put on performances at home for her friends, but then became absorbed in studying her instrument.

She sees the process as one of devolution plus evolution.

"I don't feel like it's reaching back to childhood but incorporating aspects that have always been there that I never developed and using them to project forward."

The music reaches back to the prog-rock, funk and jazz-rock fusion of the 1970s but reflects them through a modern prism of sounds.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Aubrie Sellers' raw gritty country sound

NEW CITY BLUES

Singer's debut album draws on her family's music history

Aubrie Sellers' debut album, New City Blues, introduces her as a musician that seamlessly links the indie rock enclave of East Nashville to her country roots in Texas.

It's a sound she's branded "garage country," a blend of fuzzed-out electric guitars, high-energy rock 'n' roll and Sellers' country vocals and songwriting.

"I was born in Nashville, but my whole family is from East Texas, so I consider myself a dual citizen," said the 24-year-old Sellers, who will be playing South by Southwest in Austin, Texas, on March 18.

It took years for Sellers, a third-generation musician whose grandparents were gospel singers, to find her place between her musical heritage and her own tastes, which range from bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley to Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant.

The album title, a line from her song People Talking, is about finding her place among those varying influences.

"It sort of embodied the feeling of never quite fitting in, or never knowing exactly where to belong or where to place myself," she said.

Onstage, her strong and steady voice, with just the slightest twang, goes toe-to-toe with layers of reverb and thumping drums. But offstage, Sellers says she was shy and didn't start singing in front of others until she was well into her teens.

"There's a lot to live up to when three of your parents are successful in the music business," she said.

Her mother is Grammy-winning country singer-songwriter Lee Ann Womack. Her father, Jason Sellers, is a country songwriter who has co-written singles for Jason Aldean, Reba McEntire, Rascal Flatts and Thompson Square. Her stepfather, Frank Liddell, is an award-winning producer who helped Miranda Lambert become a star.

Aubrie Sellers comes from country royalty — her mother is Grammy-winner Lee Ann Womack and her father Jason Sellers is a country songwriter. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Womack said her daughter learned to sing from jam sessions at home and watching her parents in the recording studio.

"Unlike me, who had to get in the business as an adult, Aubrie was born into it," said Womack.

"So she knows exactly what she's doing and why she's doing it. There's no explaining to her like you have to do with a lot of new artists."

Sellers wrote Like the Rain with her dad, and both he and Womack sing it with their daughter on the record. And she decided that she wanted Liddell to produce the album, which was released in January on Carnival Records via Thirty Tigers.

> **A lot of the songs are very rock-oriented**
> Aubrie Sellers

"I've always loved what Frank does," Sellers said, "because he lets the artists be themselves."

She wrote or co-wrote all 14 songs on the album, which range from the headbanger Paper Doll to the dark and moody Liar Liar, which she wrote with singer-songwriter Brandy Clark.

"A lot of the songs are very rock-oriented," Sellers said. "My voice makes them country and a lot of people think that is a strange combination. ... I think it creates something different and unique."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

You've seen his face, you just don't know where

INTERVIEW

Billions star David Costabile is quite the chameleon

David Costabile is attack dog Mike 'Wags' Wagner in Billions. CONTRIBUTED

For years, David Costabile has flourished as a most familiar unknown star, the sort of all-purpose actor you like and recognize but aren't sure from where.

With a laugh, he recalls being accosted by a fan in a Pennsylvania shopping mall who blurted out, "Hey! Are you -? Uh, do I -? Do YOU know ME?"

Fans, new and old, are welcoming Costabile in his latest role as Mike "Wags" Wagner on the Showtime power-battle drama Billions. In this lively clash of a U.S. Attorney (Paul Giamatti) and the hedge-fund titan he wants to take down, Costabile plays attack dog and consigliere to high-flying financier Bobby Axelrod (played by Damian Lewis).

"Bad idea," jokes Axelrod as Wags assists in swapping out his dress shirt for an upcoming meeting. "No man is a hero to his valet."

"That goes double for his COO," Wags fires back in his clipped purr. "So you are (expletive) with me either way."

On Billions (which airs Sundays at 10 p.m. Eastern), Wags Wagner is giving viewers one more dot to connect with the many characters Costabile has logged in the past, some so different it's hard to remember they're all him.

He was the stone-hearted managing editor on The Wire and a doofus, cuckolded husband on Flight of the Conchords. He was the fussy former law partner on Suits and the savage police detective on Damages.

On the movie screen, he played a pivotal U.S. congressman in Steven Spielberg's Lincoln and a pivotal CIA operative in the recent Michael Bay film, 13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi.

Perhaps he is best remembered as Gale Boetticher, the dweebish, karaoke-fancying chemist who served as lab assistant to crystal-meth king Walter White on Breaking Bad. As Gale, an eclectic loner with a taste for the poetry of Walt Whitman, he hurled the series toward its explosive finish as well as stealing every scene he appeared in.

A man with chipmunk cheeks and a broad forehead, a twinkle in his eye and a mischievous smile, the 49-year-old Costabile can morph into different roles almost as if shape-shifting.

> **If you get the opportunity to play lots of different characters in lots of different worlds, you get the opportunity to disappear**
> David Costabile

But he seems to have a particular gift for characters that are slightly "off."

He acknowledges a penchant for "the ineffectual bureaucratic type — a beige guy who blends into the wall."

But even if he doesn't call attention to himself, you don't dare take your eyes off him, because there's always more to his performance than first meets the eye.

"I feel really lucky that as an actor, you're trained to transform," says Costabile, who after graduation from Tufts University earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from New York University.

"If you get the opportunity to play lots of different characters in lots of different worlds, you get the opportunity to disappear. That's the most fun: when you get to disappear."

Costabile is expounding on the actor's craft over a recent lunch at a slow-foods Brooklyn bistro near the home he shares in pleasant anonymity ("No photographers on the sidewalk," he chuckles) with his wife, actress Eliza Baldi, and their infant daughter.

A Washington native, he acted in high school musicals, and his extensive stage work on and off Broadway was grounded by summers with a regional theatre company performing Shakespeare free outdoors in Albany, New York.

"It's something you're always chasing," he says of acting.

"There's never a moment when you can actually be satisfied. It's exciting to do something that you know you cannot succeed at, only hope to get closer to success."

He says he tries to take the road less travelled in each role.

"I'm not interested in what's on-the-nose," he explains. "I read the script and I say, 'Well, that's what SHOULD happen, so I'm not going to do that.' My wife says, 'Why DON'T you?!'

"But that's boring! I want to take an oblique angle to get to the answer. That's the more interesting path. Maybe it's because I'm obstinate."

For Costabile, the joy of acting comes from the element of surprise.

"I don't want you to know what's next, what I'm gonna do or think," he says. "I want to constantly push people off-balance. Even my fellow actors."

Taking the character somewhere new "without people saying, 'What the (heck) are you doing, that doesn't make sense' — it's tricky to do! But it's important. For the audience and" — he flashes an impish grin — "for me."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Donald and Melania Trump as portrayed by Taran Killam and Cecily Strong on Saturday Night Live. YOUTUBE/SCREENGRAB

The gift that keeps on giving

PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Trump candidacy rich inspiration for comedy writers

Donald Trump's presidential campaign is far from ordinary, and late-night television humorists are pushing boundaries in order to keep up.

The most memorable Trump-inspired comedy of the past few months has been more intricate than monologue jokes, reflecting a tough competition for laughs and knowledge that the best material can have a long life online.

John Oliver's epic, 20-minute Trump takedown, with research that revealed the family's name was once "Drumpf," has logged more than 2 million YouTube views. He methodically debunks the beliefs of Trump fans, even as he marvels at the candidate's brazenness. "There's a part of me that even likes this guy," the HBO host said. "It's a part of me I hate, but it's a part of me."

CONFLICT
Comics claim both excitement and depression at Trump's polarizing presidential campaign.

ABC's Jimmy Kimmel reunited Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane as their old characters from The Producers, whose chosen scam is the Trump campaign instead of a musical about Hitler. They soon recognize the story "starts out funny and then gets really, really depressing."

While Darrell Hammond effectively impersonates Trump on Saturday Night Live, none of the show's political skits have matched the impact of the "racists for Trump" commercial parody. Trevor Noah's best moment since replacing Jon Stewart on The Daily Show came when he compared Trump's words to those of African dictators.

"There are a lot of ways where a comedian can tell easy jokes about Trump and they keep repeating themselves," said Robert Thompson, director of Syracuse University's Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture. "But the really good stuff is very sophisticated, very probing political satire."

Comics were nearly shaking with excitement when Trump announced his candidacy, anticipating a great diversion to a serious campaign. Yet as the outrageous statements piled up and Trump maintained a high standing in the polls, it wasn't so funny anymore — a point Thompson noted was effectively made in a routine by Comedy Central's Larry Wilmore.

"Trump is sort of a double-edged sword," said Matt O'Brien, head writer for Conan O'Brien's TBS show. "On the one hand, he gives you so much to make fun of every day. The real problem is there are now 15 hosts going after the same piece of meat. It's hard to be original with him, because everyone is coming after him from all angles."

That's made people in late-night take detailed looks at Trump and his supporters. You may still hear jokes about Trump's orange tint or gravity-defying hairstyle, but they already feel old and tired.

The Internet adds another layer of competition. Some jokes that pop online, like the memes that compared Chris Christie to a hostage for how he looked standing behind Trump at a news conference, work much better than they would on television, said Jo Miller, executive producer of Samantha Bee's Full Frontal"on TBS.

Bee's show this week staged a party for Trump supporters, supplying drinks, massages and fact-checkers who quickly became overworked by the conversation. "How do you fact-check bluster?" Bee asked.

Even with Trump as a font of comedy, late-night shows haven't neglected other candidates. Bee has thoroughly lampooned Ted Cruz, and Larry David's spot-on Bernie Sanders impersonation is a regular on Saturday Night Live.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> How do you fact-check bluster?
> Samantha Bee

J. Peterman sombrero goes on sale next week

MEMORABILIA

Seinfeld flop of a hat tops crowd-funding campaign

Nearly 20 years after TV viewers were introduced to the urban sombrero, a Seinfeld star says he'll finally be selling the infamous hat to fans soon.

The brown head-topper, which looks like a cross between a sombrero and a Mountie hat (think Pharrell at the 2014 Grammys), was featured in a 1996 episode in which Elaine runs the J. Peterman retail company after her boss goes to Burma.

Elaine puts her idea for an urban sombrero on the cover of the catalogue but it ends up being a huge flop and sparks a backlash from those who bought it.

Actor John O'Hurley, who played the eccentric J. Peterman on the series, says the urban sombrero will go on sale next month as part of a six-week crowdfunding campaign, and hinted Seinfeld fans will also "be able to buy several things that are special."

He says the urban sombrero will be sold through the real J. Peterman Company, which was first launched in 1987 and parodied by Seinfeld. After going bankrupt in 1999, the company was subsequently relaunched by the real John Peterman with O'Hurley as an investor.

"It's only taken me 20 years of screaming at (Peterman) to issue the urban sombrero," says O'Hurley by phone recently to talk about his appearance at this weekend's Toronto ComiCon presented by Fan Expo Canada.

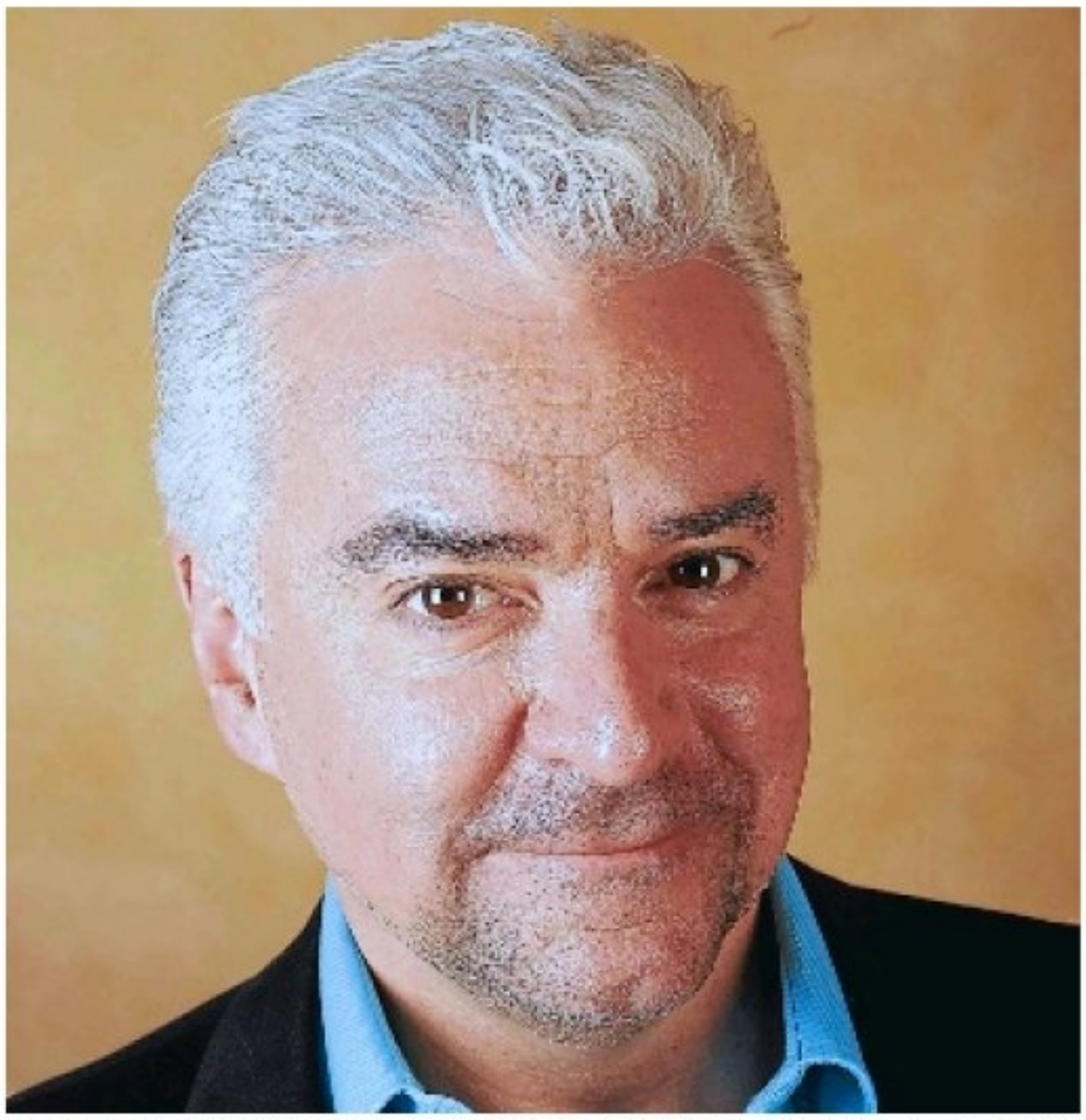
"It's going to be a big splash. I can't wait for it.... I think it's partly satisfying my ego, after many, many years of bickering with him."

J. Peterman became famous for its novel catalogues that featured collections of products from around the world with elaborate written descriptions and illustrations instead of photos.

"They said, 'We just want him to sound the way the catalogue is written,' and so that was the genesis of the character," recalls O'Hurley, who delighted fans with a mix of whimsy and weird as he delivered tangential monologues to Elaine.

"He was, for me, a '40s radio drama combined with a little bit of a bad Charles Kuralt."

O'Hurley says he found Peterman to be "a lot of fun" while the company "really parallels my life story, really."



John O'Hurley who played J. Peterman on Seinfeld says the sombrero made infamous on the TV series will soon be available for fans to buy. MATT SAYLES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The urban sombrero in a scene from Seinfeld. CONTRIBUTED

"I live an adventuresome life. I do a lot of odd things," he says. "I never wear the same hat on any given day."

Those "odd things" have included acting, voiceover work, hosting Family Feud, winning the first season of Dancing with the Stars and touring with his one-man show and the musicals Spamalot and Chicago.

The Kittery, Maine native has also written three books, released two albums of compositions, and hosted NBC's National Dog Show for nearly 15 years.

Seinfeld changed his career instantly, O'Hurley says, recalling that the part came up on the same day his ABC sitcom A Whole New Ballgame was cancelled.

"I went out to dinner that night crying in my beer with my manager, trying to take the cancellation as personally as I possibly could, and during that time Larry David's office had called," says O'Hurley.

"I said 'no' originally. I told them, 'I'm not really interested in guest-starring on somebody else's show.'"

O'Hurley says his favourite episode is the one in which Elaine eats a piece of cake she finds in J. Peterman's office. When she realizes it was actually a historical piece of wedding cake worth $29,000, she replaces it with a $2 slice of Entenmann's dessert.

"I think it's still like comfort food," O'Hurley says of the series, which is streaming on CraveTV and Hulu and is endlessly rerun on TV.

O'Hurley doesn't foresee a reunion, though.

"No, I think we're all too old and grey right now," he says.

"It was written at a time that was pre-cellphones, so people actually talked with each other, they had conversations. They sat around in a coffee shop and talked rather than texting each other. It was a different time."

Toronto ComiCon runs March 18-20 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Symbolism on wall of Better Call Saul

In Breaking Bad, this painting, top, of a man alone in a boat, rowing from a beach where a woman and two children bid him farewell, crossed paths with protagonist Walter White twice — in the first and final seasons. CONTRIBUTED

PICTURE THIS

Art a window into world of Breaking Bad and its prequel

In the first and final seasons of the TV phenomenon that was Breaking Bad, the same painting crossed paths with protagonist Walter White (Bryan Cranston) and not by chance: It depicted a man alone in a boat, rowing from a beach where a woman and two children were bidding him farewell, and its symbolism — that of someone willingly pulling away from their family — was an unmistakeable link to the show's core.

The painting's appearance twice in different settings within the series' larger world was a terrifically sly, small-detail nod to viewers paying attention to everything showrunner Vince Gilligan and his crack team of producers put before them.

But when the smash hit and critical darling wrapped its 62-episode run in 2013, Gilligan & Co. didn't have that meticulous attention to the craft drift into the brilliant New Mexico horizon. Rather, they carried it into their next project: AMC's prequel spinoff Better Call Saul, on which Gilligan collaborates with Breaking Bad writer/producer Peter Gould as executive co-producers.

As part of their larger effort to tell as rich, robust and rewarding a story as possible, they also continued a subtle, savvy employment of pictures — of wall art and the still image — as windows into characters' souls and destinies.

By and large, the art of Better Call Saul was obscured by shadow in its first season, but so was one of the plot's key components. (Fair warning: spoilers are ahead.)

Whenever audiences saw a picture or painting, it was usually located in the home belonging to Chuck McGill, brother of series centrepiece Jimmy McGill/Saul Goodman.

Chuck's psychosomatic "allergy" to electromagnetism leaves his house shrouded in darkness and that includes his extensive art collection. As a result, we either saw only the frames or art that was half-lit. We didn't have the full picture, either, of the overarching story.

Now, four episodes into the series' second season, Better Call Saul's relationship with art has become a portal into Jimmy and Mike Ehrmantraut, its two characters with the biggest roles in the Breaking Bad universe.

CANVASSED

Framing the story arc

In Breaking Bad, the painting of the rowing man debuts when White's cancer is diagnosed. It appears for the second time when he has morphed into crystal meth kingpin Heisenberg and lowered himself to partner with a gang of neo-Nazi murderers. Put differently, he initially encounters the art when the rot in him is physical and then again when the disease that's overtaken him is spiritual.

In other words, art serves as a bookend to the character's arc. And as Better Call Saul continues unfolding — and Jimmy's life continues unravelling — audiences should be on the lookout for more art symbols as signifiers of the bigger story.

The art that surrounds Jimmy/Saul materializes in the first episode, when he moves into a new office as an attorney with burgeoning law firm Davis & Main. There are two framed works in the room: a picture of a boxcar, stopped in a desert, with the centre open to reveal a complete lack of cargo; the second is a painting of a man, falling backward, with no hands and a potted plant in place of his head.

Together, the two works underscore who Jimmy/Saul is. The empty train car signifies the emotional hole in him while also bringing to mind one of Breaking Bad's most memorable robberies: the pilfering of a train in its final season. The falling body represents the ongoing plummet, personally and professionally, of a man nicknamed Slippin' Jimmy in his formative years.

The lack of hands of the falling man suggests Jimmy isn't entirely in control of his fate, and the plant where his head should be reinforces the reality the character is still growing. It also serves as a wonderful connection to one of Walter White's most heinous schemes in Breaking Bad, a scheme Saul helped him pull off. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

0% APR Purchase Financing is available on 2015 CX-9. Based on a representative agreement using an offered pricing of $35,736 for the new 2015 CX-9 GS (DV5685AA00) the cost of borrowing for an 84-month term is $0, monthly payment is $196 and total finance obligation is $35,736. **Based on a representative example using a finance price of $23,146/$24,741 for the 2016 CX-3 GX (HR0686AA00)/2016 CX-5 GX (NK1X66AA00) at a rate of 2.99%/2.49% APR, the cost of borrowing for an 84-month term is $2,535/$2,244, bi-weekly payment is $141/$148, total finance obligation is $25,682/$26,986. Taxes are extra and required at the time of purchase. ‡Starting from price for 2015 Mazda3 GX (3410A6SAA00)/2016 CX-5 GX AT AWD (NK1X86AB00)/2016 CX-3 GX (HR0686AA00)/2015 CX-9 GS (DK5385AA00) is $14,999/$29,288/$$24,999/$34,265 and includes a cash discount of $2,750/$1,250/$0/$5,000. The cash discount applies to the cash purchase only and is deducted from the negotiated pre-tax price and cannot be combined with subsidized purchase financing or leasing rates. $500 discount on 2015 Mazda3 is only available to existing Mazda owners. Mazda Owner Renewal cash discounts cannot be combined with Mazda Owner Renewal rate discounts or with $0A rates. All prices include block heater, $20 new tire charge, $100 a/c charge where applicable, freight & PDI of $1,695/$1,895 for Mazda3/CX-3, CX-5, CX-9. As shown, price for 2015 Mazda3 GT (3410L6SAA00)/2016 CX-3 GT (HR0TX86AA00)/2016 CX-5 GT (NK0TL86AA00)/2015 CX-9 (DK0T38SAA00) is $28,115/$31,315/$37,215/$48,265. PPSA, license, insurance, taxes, down payment (or equivalent trade-in) are extra and may be required at the time of purchase. Dealer may sell/lease for less. Dealer order/trade may be necessary on certain vehicles. Lease and Finance on approved credit for qualified customers only. Offers valid January 5 – February 1, 2016, while supplies last. Prices and rates subject to change without notice. Visit mazda.ca or see your dealer for complete details. *To learn more about the Mazda Unlimited Warranty, go to mazdaunlimited.ca. i-Activ AWD feature is not available on Mazda3 models.

Mark Margolis, in the wheelchair, as cartel enforcer Tio Salamanca, in a scene from Season 3 of Breaking Bad. AMC/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mark Margolis on return of Breaking Bad villain

INTERVIEW

Actor shocked at resurrection of Tio in Better Call Saul

There was precious little to glean from Breaking Bad about one of its greatest villains, Hector (Tio) Salamanca.

But with just one appearance on Better Call Saul, we've already got a taste of a rich backstory that adds some shading to later storylines.

Warning: read no further to avoid spoilers for either series.

Actor Mark Margolis was surprised when he heard his cartel character was being revived for the Breaking Bad prequel, which focuses on the origins of Bob Odenkirk's slippery lawyer character Saul Goodman.

But he relished the chance to return to New Mexico and reteam with creator Vince Gilligan, who killed Tio off with a spectacular TV death that also took out vengeful drug boss Gus Fring, played by Giancarlo Esposito.

Wheelchair bound, mute, and possibly brain damaged, Tio Salamanca commanded his murderously loyal nephews with just the tap of a bell.

On Monday's episode of Better Call Saul — which takes place roughly six years before the events of Breaking Bad — he turned up able-bodied, English-speaking and sharp as a tack. He strongly encouraged former dirty cop Mike Ehrmantraut to help spare his nephew Tuco some jail time.

Margolis, whose other dark roles have included an assassin on Scarface and a prison-bound Italian mob boss on HBO's Oz, chatted recently by phone about revisiting his "monstrous" character. He asked us where we were in Canada.

I'm in Toronto.
In the summer I was there for a month working on My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2.

Yes, I was going to ask you about that.
They are the same cast from the original movie. I'm an addition who comes over from Greece.... I don't even know if I should reveal that much. I'm in the last third of the movie, but I have a very important part.

And for once are you not playing a heavy?
See, people always say that to me. If I sat down with you and we had like an hour I would show you that in my whole life I probably have 150 things, played 21 heavies and the other 129 were not heavies. But that's the way everybody seems to see me.

You make an impact.
Yeah, but I don't want to be known as a heavy, I never thought of myself that way. Like, there are people who also think I only play Mafia guys and in my whole life I've only done five of those. But I guess I'm stuck with what I'm stuck with.... I just want to be known as pert and perky and sweet.

On Better Call Saul we get to hear Tio Salamanca speak English for the first time, albeit with a thick Mexican accent.
The first episode (of Breaking Bad) I was ever in they thought I was kind of catatonic or brain dead sitting in front of a TV with a novela playing, and Jesse and Walt were conspiring to poison my nephew. Granted, a lot of what's going on I can see visually but they were also speaking about what they wanted to do. So you could make an assumption that I do understand some of what they're saying as well.

> **I don't want to be known as a heavy ... I just want to be known as pert and perky and sweet.**
> Actor Mark Margolis

It must be nice to know your character is guaranteed to survive this series.
But at any moment (Vince) can have me fall over and be completely without the ability to speak and I'm sure he has that in mind somewhere. With Vince it can happen at any moment ... I could be struck by a bullet, I could be hit by a car, I could have a sudden stroke, a seizure, lightning might come down and strike me from heaven.

Tell me about learning Tio would be killed.
I had contacted (Vince) months and months before about a way in which I thought he could kill me off.... I had some idea for Giancarlo Esposito's character to take me out into the hills and crucify me.... I mentioned it to Vince and then, it must have been about eight months later, I got this call. And I think I immediately said, "You're calling because you're going to kill me." And he said, "Yeah, but wait until I tell you how we're going to do it!"

And it was pretty spectacular. One of the great TV deaths.
People always talk to me about killing myself. And I say, I wasn't really killing myself, I was killing Gus and I happened to be collateral damage. But it was worth it.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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DEATH OF A DRAMA

Looking for clues as to why Motive cancelled

We know the victim: Vancouver-based police drama Motive, which returns Tuesday at 10 p.m. ET on CTV, for a fourth and final season.

The network is pulling the trigger after this. What we don't have is the motive for killing Motive. Here are the usual suspects:

Poor ratings?
Nope. Motive, has a strong and loyal audience. Season 3 was watched by an average 1.2 million viewers a week. It was among the most-watched Canadian dramas last season.

HAIRCUT CURSE
The show Felicity died after Keri Russell cut her hair. Motive star Kristen Lehman cut her hair, too. Connection?

The cast hates each other?
No evidence of that during a Vancouver set visit last December. "We love working together so much," says Kristin Lehman (Det. Angie Flynn). The dynamic between the two leads: Det. Flynn (Lehman) and Det. Oscar Vega (Louis Ferreira) is less of the usual romantic tension, more friendship. But cop shows thrive on conflict and networks encourage it. Ferreira gets the Vega-Flynn relationship "may not be as dynamic as some other shows," but he's still damn proud of it.

Rejected by America?
Maybe. When ABC dropped Motive after its second summer run, the clock was ticking to find a new broadcast partner. Executive producer Dennis Heaton (Call Me Fitz) said he always understood he was producing the show for CTV and NBC.

It's too Canadian
Motive hid some of its Vancouver-ness, "fictionalizing" the police world a little, admits Heaton. That seemed to change the last two seasons.

"There's a very Vancouver sensibility to it," he says, telling his writing staff at one point, "Enough developers! Enough with the construction guys!"

The "Anywhere, USA" approach was seen in the past as a way to grow a show internationally. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toast pops from Shonda Rhimes' creative brain

Jerrika Hinton will star in Shonda Rhimes' new pilot, Toast. GETTY

FALL SEASON

Pilot features cast of Grey's Anatomy in fresh new roles

The creator of a slew of series for ABC has picked a star surgeon from Grey's Anatomy for the lead role in her new pilot, Toast, developed for the 2016/2017 season, and vying for a spot on ABC's fall schedule.

Known to fans of the small-screen series as Stephanie Edwards, a surgical resident in Grey's Anatomy, Jerrika Hinton will star in Shonda Rhimes' newest creation.

Toast is set at the rehearsal dinner of Max and Page, the night before their wedding. Over the course of the evening, their family and friends share anecdotes about the pair as they toast the couple. This leads to a series of flashbacks showing the highs and lows the couple encountered on the road to marriage.

Jerrika Hinton plays Page, a no-nonsense woman from a well-to-do Texas family. Her future husband, Max, played by Jono Kenyon, is quite the opposite. Having dropped out of college and with his father in prison, this charismatic but clumsy character is worried about what his in-laws really think.

The pilot will see Jerrika Hinton star alongside fellow Grey's Anatomy cast member, Tessa Ferrer, who played intern Leah Murphy in Seasons 9 and 10, before being fired by Dr Webber. She'll be playing Jules in the new pilot, Max's tomboyish best friend.

Toast is the second pilot developed by Shonda Rhimes for the autumn 2016 season on US TV, together with Still Star-Crossed, inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. She already has three shows on American TV, with Grey's Anatomy, Scandal and How to Get Away With Murder. A fourth series, The Catch, is set to air March 24.

AFP

New Orleans backdrop to The Passion musical

LIVE EVENT

Megastars to appear in show about Jesus's final hours

The tale of the final hours of the life of Jesus of Nazareth has been told countless times — but on Sunday, Fox will broadcast a retelling with a modern-day musical twist, with the resurrected City of New Orleans as the backdrop.

The Passion, which airs at 8 p.m. ET, is based on a format created in the Netherlands that has been produced annually since 2011 and aired for the last five years.

The U.S. version follows Jesus as he presides over the Last Supper, and then is betrayed by Judas, put on trial by Pontius Pilate, convicted, crucified and resurrected.

The cast includes Telenovela actor/singer Jencarlos Canela as Jesus, rocker Chris Daughtry as Judas, country singer Trisha Yearwood as Mary, British singer-songwriter Seal as Pontius Pilate and singer Prince Royce as Peter.

"New Orleans is an example of struggle, of redemption, of hope and grace. That city's been through so much and to be the backdrop for this production gives the story a lot of layers," Yearwood said.

The two-hour live event is being hosted by New Orleans native and filmmaker Tyler Perry and includes opening and closing number by gospel singer Yolanda Adams.

"There's so much negativity on TV and film that I had to be a part of something that's going to encourage and uplift," Perry said.

"Love and compassion is at the heart of this story."

The story is told in a modern way, but "respects the biblical essence of the story," Canela said. "A person that is a believer and is religious will see it and enjoy it and not feel like they've changed the word because the word is intact but it's being surrounded with modern elements and modern music," he said.

Executive producer Mark Bracco is hoping The Passion project will inspire families to gather on Palm Sunday and watch the latest in a string of recent live prime-time musicals that has included Fox's staging of Grease held in January and NBC's The Wiz! Live, in December.

"At its heart, it's a religious event. But at the end of the day it's a great story," Bracco said.

Jencarlos Canela, background centre, play Jesus in The Passion, a two-hour musical airing live from New Orleans, Sunday at 8 p.m. ET. MICHAEL BECKER/FOX VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> New Orleans is an example of struggle, of redemption, of hope and grace ... and to be the backdrop for this production gives the story a lot of layers.
>
> Trisha Yearwood, who will play Mary in the cast

The soundtrack includes songs ranging from Imagine Dragons' Demons and Tina Turner's We Don't Need Another Hero to Hoobastank's The Reason and Celine Dion's Love Can Move Mountains.

Daughtry and Canela pair up on Demons, in the scene in which Judas betrays Jesus.

"These are modern songs with a message that are very powerful and emotional.

Yearwood will perform five songs during the broadcast.

"I'm out of my element," she said. "It's live, and I agreed to portray Mary. This is a big deal. I've asked all my friends to pray for me, and I'm serious. I really need for them to do it."

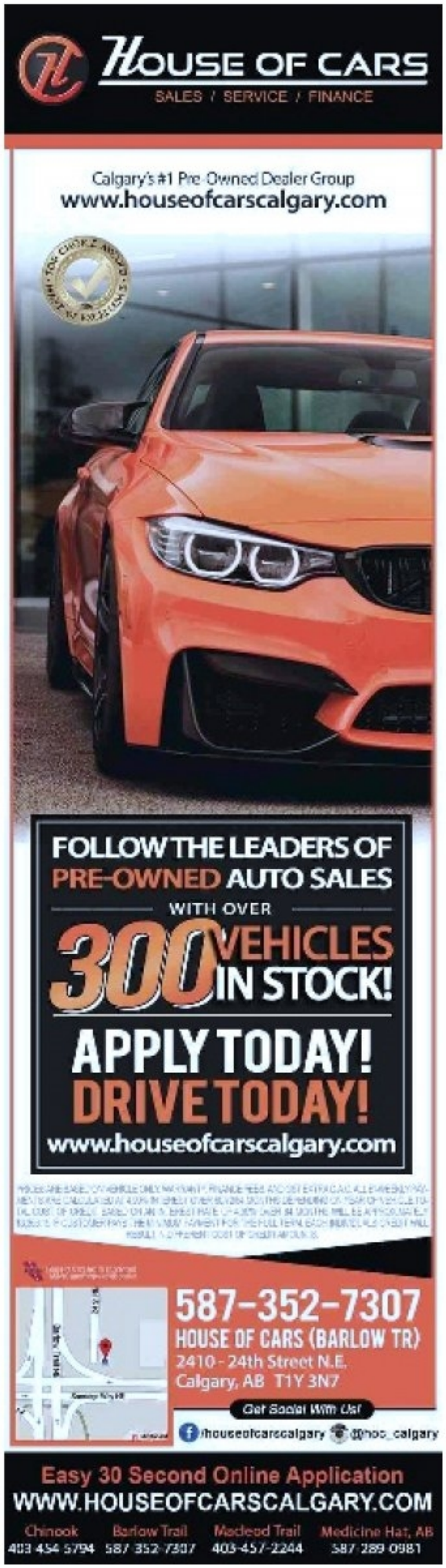
Parts of the event will be staged live in New Orleans, including a procession of hundreds of people carrying a 20-foot, illuminated cross from Champion Square outside the Superdome to a stage at Woldenberg Park on the banks of the Mississippi River.

Bracco noted that several local artists and actors were cast and scenes also were filmed at Audubon Park, in the French Quarter and along the Riverwalk.

Daughtry said the production "has a common theme of love, acceptance and forgiveness and I hope that it will do the same for us as a people. It really inspires togetherness.

"As much as New Orleans has bounced back, trial after trial after trial, I would love to see us as a community do the same thing," he said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Marvel's Elektra is a 'sociopath': Actress

NETFLIX

Yung plays Daredevil's love interest in second season

Elodie Yung stars as Elektra in Season 2 of Netflix's Daredevil. CONTRIBUTED

Elektra, the ninja warrior and love interest of the Marvel superhero Daredevil has not fared well in the minds of some fans.

The last time we saw her she was played by Jennifer Garner in the 2005 movie of the same name. Garner, wife of former Daredevil Ben Affleck, played Elektra less as damaged psychopath and more like a suburban soccer mom with a bag full of ninja flying stars.

That image will likely be erased with the second season of Netflix's Daredevil which lands Friday.

French-Cambodian actress Elodie Yung has been cast as Elektra Natchios, and she seems determined to hew to Frank Miller's much more intense vision of the character.

"She's basically a sociopath," says Yung in an interview. "That's basically how I played her. She can't bond properly with anyone. For her it's a game. She is a complex character who suffered when she was young and now tries to fight her demons. But she copes in the sense that if she has a goal to achieve, nothing will stop her."

Yung seems born for the role of Elektra. For one thing, she is a black belt in karate. She's also got smarts, having a masters in law from the University of Paris. This is also not her first time at the ninja superhero game, having played the very Elektra-like Jinx in G.I. Joe: Retaliation.

"I think yes, she has some darkness in her definitely. I think there's a journey to her. She will question all that. She will try to find the truth about herself," says Yung. "She is mysteriously cold, and she's a very mysterious character when she comes back into Matt (Daredevil) and his world But still, there is something deep going on between the two."

The complexity of the character seems to suit the new, darker Netflix Marvel universe, of which the first season of Daredevil proved to be a hit. The follow up series Jessica Jones — the best superhero show of 2015 — followed on that premise, with several more series still in production culminating in the team-up series The Defenders.

Fans of Season 1 will find Season 2 mostly satisfying, but not as intriguing as the first. This time around Daredevil has some superhero buddy help to keep things interesting. Critics were given the first seven episodes of the season.

In Season 2 Matt Murdoch is joined by not just Elektra, but Frank Castle, also known as The Punisher played by The Walking Dead's Jon Bernthal. Deborah Ann Woll, Elden Henson and Rosario Dawson also return.

What made Season 1 riveting was the origins story of how a blind lawyer turns into the man without fear. The character arc of Murdoch coincides with the rise of the Kingpin (Vincent D'Onofrio) as one of the best villains on television.

Without a charismatic villain, the writers don't get luxury of that kind of back story to play with in the new season. Much of the first half of the second season is Daredevil jousting with his new superhero buddies, which is good fun — but not the psychodrama of Season 1.

Bernthal's Punisher feels flat — although the character is difficult to play since his mood ranges from rage to over the top rage and it's hard to find emotional common ground.

Yung's Elektra as love interest and superhero is more rounded and intriguing. She adds an icy, submersive element that contrasts with Matt Murdoch's boy scout leanings.

Yung says she grappled to coming to terms with the character when she was first cast.

"It was my big problem at the beginning when I started to dig into what is a sociopath. I ... needed to get empathy, not to judge her. She lies, she kills, I didn't want to judge that," says Yung. "I needed to understand that aspect of her to portray her. It's one of the most complex characters I've had to play."

So far Yung says she has not viewed the 2005 Elektra film because she didn't want to be influenced by the role. She did read the comics though.

"I got really inspired by them. It's a wonderful piece of art. It gave you such a strong image of Elektra as a complex character who suffered when she was young and tries to fight her demons."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

An atypical approach has won the interactive murder mystery plenty of acclaim since its 2015 release. SAM BARLOW

Her Story wins at IGF

FESTIVAL

Crime fiction takes home grand prize, best narrative

Interactive murder mystery Her Story scooped the Independent Games Festival's Grand Prize at a March 16 awards ceremony, with indie hits Undertale, Oxenfree, Mini Metro and Keep Talking... among the night's other winners.

Using pre-recorded footage and a facsimile of police evidence databases, Her Story asked players to put together the pieces of a murder investigation and find out what really happened.

Made available on Windows PC, Mac, iPhone and iPad in 2015, Her Story won considerable praise from the games press and from its players alike, with the IGF's judging pool deeming it worthy of both the Excellence in Narrative award as well as overall Seamus McNally Grand Prize.

Other winners on the night included public transport puzzle solver Mini Metro (Excellence in Audio), virtual reality showpiece Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes (Excellence in Design), and dramatic teen adventure Oxenfree (Excellence in Visual Art).

Genre subverting retro homage Undertale was voted winner of the Audience Award, with The Hole Story winning the Rising Star accolade, Beglitched taking Best Student Game, and the intensely biographical Cibele winning the Nuovo Award for innovation.

The Independent Game Festival Awards took place at the Game Developers Conference, San Francisco. AFP

VIRTUAL REALITY

Oculus Rift unveils launch lineup, apps

A 30-game roster of launch titles has been announced for the Oculus Rift's consumer headset, whose shipping date is March 28.

A high spec virtual reality headset that ships with an Xbox One controller, motion sensor and remote, each $599 Rift is powered by a capable, modern PC.

At the Game Developers Conference on March 16, Oculus VR revealed 30 games which will be supporting the headset at launch, with colorful action adventure Lucky's Tale and sci-fi shooter EVE: Valkyrie already included with the headset as part of a pre-order deal, and the others sold separately.

30

The headphone manufacturer revealed 30 games will support the headset at launch. AFP

While the Oculus website published a list of 30 titles with "day one" availability, deviations within an official trailer suggested several other titles that are being readied for a release window splash, such as as Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed-inspired spinoff Eagle Flight, and mountaineering challenge The Climb.

Common to both formats are existing VR favorites such as Elite Dangerous, Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes and Project CARS.

In addition, the Oculus Home app developed for Samsung's mobile-powered Gear VR is being brought over to the Rift, while a desktop app will allow users to browse Oculus Store content. AFP

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Anne Frank's fairy tale book for sale

HOLOCAUST VICTIM

Hand-signed copy of classic Grimm's work up for bids

Anne Frank wrote her name, and that of her sister Margot, in the German edition of Grimm's fairy tales. AFP FILE PHOTO

A book of fairy tales owned and signed by German-born Jewish diarist Anne Frank before she perished in the Holocaust will go on sale in New York valued at $20,000 to $30,000 US, an auction house said Wednesday.

The well-worn edition of Grimm's fairy tales in German, which includes favorites Snow White and Hansel and Gretel, belonged to Frank and her sister Margot before they went into hiding in 1942 to escape the Nazis.

Frank wrote her name and that of her sister on the fly leaf, said Swann Auction Galleries, which will conduct the sale on May 5. The book will go on public display in its New York showroom on May 2.

The handwriting matches other samples written by Anne Frank, said the auction house. The inside cover of the book is stamped in purple with the initials MF.

The book was published in 1925 in Vienna.

It was not known when Frank acquired the book, nor when she signed it. She was born in Frankfurt in 1929 and her sister in 1926. The family moved to Amsterdam in the mid-1930s to escape the Nazis.

"What just infuses it with so much incredible emotion and history and potential value is the fact that it is signed by Anne Frank. It was her personal copy," said Nicholas Lowry, president of Swann Auction Galleries.

Anne Frank's diary, which she wrote in hiding, was published two years after she died, aged 15, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in March 1945, just two months before the Nazis were defeated.

It has sold more than 30 million copies and been translated from the original Dutch into 67 languages.

The teenager also wrote short stories while living in a secret annex with her family and four other Jews, until they were betrayed in August 1944.

"This book, a book of Grimm's fairy tales, was very likely the well-source of all of her inspiration," said Lowry. "This book really is the springboard from which her nascent literary career and dreams of being a writer were launched."

The well-thumbed volume has 148 pages and is illustrated with black silhouettes. It has some dog-eared pages and a few ink stains. Lowry said the pre-sale estimate of the book was $20,000 to $30,000 US.

> **"This book ... was very likely the well-source of all her inspiration ... and dreams of being a writer.**
> Nicholas Lowry, president, Swann Auction Galleries

"There's no real way of knowing exactly how much it's going to sell for," he told AFP. "But the estimate that we've put on it, I think, reflects that we're going to let the market decide."

Swann Auction Galleries said it is only the third piece of Anne Frank holograph material to come to public sale, and the first in nearly 30 years.

In 1988, Swann sold letters and postcards written by the Frank sisters to pen pals in the United States for $165,000. In 1989, Christie's sold a verse inscription signed "Anne Frank" for $35,200.

The fairytale book, which was left behind when the family went into hiding, was bought in a bookshop by a family who only realized its progeny in the 1970s, when they wrote to Frank's father Otto offering to return it, Lowry said.

A letter from Otto, the only person from the annex to survive the war, urging them to keep it in 1977, is being sold with the book. Otto Frank died in 1980. AFP

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#57042	2015	Chev 2500 Sierra Double Cab SLE 4x4	Was $58,366	NOW $41,855	SAVINGS $16,377
#57221	2015	Chev 1500 Sierra Double Cab 4x4	Was $57,675	NOW $44,488	SAVINGS $13,187
#57236	2015	GMC 1500 Sierra Double Cab 4x4	Was $57,675	NOW $44,488	SAVINGS $13,187
#57321	2015	GMC 2500 Sierra C/C Denali 4x4	Was $75,870	NOW $58,888	SAVINGS $16,982
#57328	2015	GMC 1500 Sierra C/C 4x4	Was $57,520	NOW $44,388	SAVINGS $13,132
#57337	2015	GMC 1500 Sierra Double Cab 4x4	Was $57,520	NOW $44,388	SAVINGS $13,132
#56311	2015	Chev 1500 Silverado C/C 4x4	Was $63,086	NOW $48, 888	SAVINGS $14,197
#56500	2015	Chev Canyon Ext/C 4x4	Was $40,955	NOW $35,888	SAVINGS $5,067
#54129	2015	Chev HD Express Cutaway	Was $54,771	NOW $48,488	SAVINGS $6,283
#56362	2015	Chev 2500 HD Silverado C/C 4x4	Was $71,835	NOW $55,488	SAVINGS $16,347
#56252	2015	Verano	Was $26,466	NOW $20,588	SAVINGS $5,877
#52415	2015	Chev Cruze 4D 1LS	Was $19,370	NOW $11,998	SAVINGS $6,372
#56389	2015	Chev 1500 C/C High Country 4x4	Was $66,935	NOW $53,588	SAVINGS $13,347
#56402	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4	Was $59,330	NOW $42,888	SAVINGS $16,412
# 55410	2015	Chev 1500 Silverado C/C 4x4	Was $100,000	SOLD	SAVINGS $17,112
# 55413	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4	Was $53,965	NOW $38,888	SAVINGS $15,077
# 57515	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD SLE C/C 4x4	Was $56,590	NOW $40,888	SAVINGS $15,702
# 55411	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4	Was $54,900	NOW $38,888	SAVINGS $15,102
# 55412	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4	Was $53,955	NOW $38,888	SAVINGS $15,077
# 55419	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4	Was $53,965	NOW $38,888	SAVINGS $15077
# 55425	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4 Duramax	Was $82,615	NOW $65,488	SAVINGS $17,127
# 55426	2015	Chev Silverado HD C/C 4x4	Was $82,615	NOW $65,488	SAVINGS $17,127
# 55428	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD C/C 4x4 josh	Was $82,615	NOW $65,488	SAVINGS $17,127
# 55436	2015	Chev 1500 Silverado DBL Lowered	Was $62,056	NOW $48,488	SAVINGS $13,568
# 55455	2015	Chev 1500 Silverado C/C 4x4	Was $63,535	NOW $49,488	SAVINGS $14,047
# 54942	2015	Chev 2500 Savana Cargo Van	Was $39,335	NOW $34,488	SAVINGS $4,867
# 54943	2015	Chev 2500 Savana Cargo Van	Was $39,335	NOW $34,488	SAVINGS $4,867
# 57557	2015	GMC 1500 Sierra Reg/C 4x4	Was $36,910	NOW $29,988	SAVINGS $6,912
# 56531	2015	Chev Canyon SLE Crew Cab	Was $36,010	SOLD	SAVINGS $6,012
#54945	2015	Chev 2500 Savana Cargo Van	Was $39,335	NOW $34,488	SAVINGS $4,867
# 54835	2015	Chev Trax LS	Was $21,490	NOW $16,688	SAVINGS $4,802
# 56398	2015	GMC Terrain SLE2	Was $33,629	NOW $26,988	SAVINGS $6,701
# 52402	2015	Chev Cruze 1LS	Was $15,170	NOW $11,998	SAVINGS $6,172
# 56674	2015	GMC Yukon XL DENALI	Was $86,355	NOW $77,488	SAVINGS $10,867
# 55754	2015	Chev 2500 Silverado HD 4x4 C/C	Was $81,480	NOW $64,788	SAVINGS $16,692

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How the stars brought golf to Palm Springs

With more than a 110 courses and a 1950s ring-a-ding vibe, Palm Springs is one of the best places to gulf in North America. COURTESY OF VISITGREATERPALMSPRINGS.COM

CALIFORNIA

Desert oasis a top place to tee-off

Brian Kendall
For Metro Canada

Golf and Palm Springs go together like Bob Hope and Bing Crosby.

Hope, Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and other celebrity golfers helped popularize the game in a desert oasis famous as Hollywood's Haven.

Just 193 kilometres east of downtown Los Angeles, Palm Springs provided a welcome escape from the city's smog and congestion. The stars came to bask in the abundant sunshine and delight in the starkly dramatic scenery of the Coachella Valley.

With more than 110 courses, golf remains a major draw throughout a popular sunbird destination that works hard to retain its ring-a-ding 1950s vibe. Between tee-offs, budget time for a tour of the sleekly elegant midcentury modern hotels and civic buildings, shopping on posh North Palm Canyon Drive, and a happy hour cocktail at Melvyn's, one of Sinatra's old haunts.

Golf came to the Coachella Valley in 1925 with the opening of O'Donnell Golf Club, a private course frequented by Clark Gable and other matinee idols.

Today, courses by acclaimed golf architects are scattered throughout Greater Palm Springs, an area encompassing old Palm Springs and eight seamlessly connected sister communities, most notably La Quinta, Palm Desert and Indian Wells.

Former host of the Bob Hope Classic, SilverRock Resort's Arnold Palmer Classic Course in La Quinta is spectacularly routed along the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains. La Quinta is also home to PGA West, one of North America's premier golf properties. Most famous of the resort's six layouts is the Stadium Course, a Pete Dye-designed monster rated one of the game's best — and toughest — courses.

A highlight in Palm Desert is Shadow Ridge Golf Club, an expertly sculpted Australia Sandbelt-inspired course by Nick Faldo. Equally strong are the two Hurdzan-Fry designs at Desert Willow Golf Resort.

CELEB POWER
Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and others helped popularize gulf in Palm Springs.

And the must-play in Indian Wells is the Players Course at Indian Wells Golf Resort. This unyielding John Fought design stretches nearly 7,400 yards from the tips.

Other top courses include Eagle Falls Golf Course, Escena Golf Club, the Pete Dye and Gary Player layouts at Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort and Spa, and Shadow Mountain Golf Club, one of the few courses designed by the legendary Gene Sarazen.

With street names like Jack Benny Road, Gene Autry Trail and Ginger Rogers Road, even the drive to your next tee time or sightseeing excursion becomes more adventure than chore in this celebrity obsessed burg.

Sunnylands, at the intersection of Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope Drives in Rancho Mirage, is another notable haunt of Hollywood luminaries past and present.

Built in the 1960s for publisher, diplomat and philanthropist Walter Annenberg, the pink-roofed Desert Modernism-style mansion (complete with a nine-hole golf course) is now open to the public.

Presidents from Eisenhower to Obama have visited. When greeting Queen Elizabeth in 1983, Annenberg announced she would "see how ordinary Americans live."

Welcome to Palm Springs.

Visit Brian's website at canadiangolftraveller.com

Tap into popular sugaring-off season

Guests at Domaine Handfield sugar shack take a tractor ride through the forest, in Saint Marc-sur Richilieu, Que.
RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

QUEBEC

Syrup-soaked meals, maple forest walks signal spring

It's a sweet Quebec tradition that is a sign of spring being right around the corner.

Sugaring-off season is big business in the province, which accounts for nearly three-quarters of the maple syrup produced uniquely in North America.

As production ratchets up, business gets booming at a few hundred restaurant-style "cabanes a sucre" sprinkled around the province.

Louis-Robert Handfield, owner of the Auberge Handfield inn and an adjoining maple farm in Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu, says locals embrace the season as a way of shaking off a winter's worth of cabin fever.

"I strongly believe people go to the sugar shack anticipating the coming of the spring," Handfield said.

And of course the traditional, heavy meal, all drowned in the sweet, sticky maple syrup.

Menus vary slightly among restaurants, but typically include pea soup with ham, maple-smoked ham and sausages, crisp pork rinds, baked beans, eggs and fresh bread. It's topped off with desserts like deep-fried dough, sugar pie, doughnuts and crepes.

In recent years, a handful of establishments, including Handfield's, have started offering vegan, vegetarian and non-pork options.

"We had a lot of families who wouldn't come because one of the family members had a specific dietary requirement — be it vegetarian, vegan or without pork or lactose-free or gluten-free," he said.

Handfield says this will be third years he's offered items like tofu, vegetable polenta, green pea soup with mint, and baked trout in a soya-and-maple lacquer.

In addition, there's a chart at the table letting patrons know that regular shack staples such as boiled potatoes, coleslaw, marinated beets and pickles are available.

Tinkering with sugar shack menus may have caused a stir a decade ago, but there's no controversy here, Handfield assures.

The regular meal still accounts for 85 per cent of business.

"We offer both types of meals," Handfield said. "We make sure we don't touch the integrity of the traditions."

Some Quebecers see a trip to a sugar shack as part of their ancestral history.

"We come here every year and the meal is something we look forward to," Michel Menard said as he waited in line with his family at La Goudrelle, a sugar shack near Mont-Saint-Gregoire, south of Montreal.

"It's nice to get out to the country for some fresh air and also, it's as kid-friendly as it comes."

Many shacks offer a range of activities: traditional music, children's face painting, pony rides, tractor rides and petting zoos.

Aside from the meal, the other musts include walking through the maple forest to work off the meal.

And of course the maple taffy — known as "tire" in French, made from ladling boiling syrup on fresh snow and twirling it on to a Popsicle stick.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

IF YOU GO

How to find them
There are plenty of sugar shack options within a short drive of major cities like Montreal or Quebec City. A partial list is available from Quebec's Tourism Department.

Special requests
If you're interested in vegetarian/vegan options, best to call ahead and reserve. Reservations are also needed for some of the smaller sugar shacks, but given the popularity, be prepared to wait in line.

TRAVEL NOTES SO BAD IT'S GOOD, DANCE! & H.P. LOVECRAFT

Detroit museum's exhibit explores dance in America

A new exhibit organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts presents more than 90 paintings, sculptures, photographs and costumes to celebrate and explain the importance of dance in American culture. Dance! American Art 1830-1960 runs until June 12. Live performances, movies, dance demonstrations and talks are planned as part of the exhibit.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dance by Aaron Douglas. DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Spanish town looks to revive botched fresco hype

More than three years after a botched fresco restoration by an octogenarian painter became a major tourist attraction for the northern Spanish town of Boria, local officials are looking to inject new life into the phenomenon by opening a centre that celebrates the fresco. The story of Cecilia Gimenez's restoration of a Christ fresco in a town sanctuary went viral in 2012. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fans use Lovecraft to promote Providence's weird side

H.P. Lovecraft.

Fans of H.P. Lovecraft's writings are trying to use the growing fame of the early 20th century fantasy-horror writer to promote Providence's weird side. Lovecraft so identified with Rhode Island's capital city that he wrote "I am Providence" in a letter. His headstone bears the phrase. Some of Lovecraft's best-known works are set in Providence. Tuesday marks the 79th anniversary of his death. A marker will be unveiled near where Lovecraft's childhood house once stood.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Stk# 160100A V6, 3.5L engine and 6-speed auto, 270hp and 248 lb/ft of torque, Touring Package, premium black leather, wood trim, heated and ventilated front seats with driver seat memory system, power moon roof, auto levelling headlamps, voice activated HDD navigation system with remote touch, back up camera and much more!

$36,920

2013 Lexus GX460 AWD

Stk# 160154A 68,449KM's, V8, 4.6L engine, 6-speed auto, 301hp, 329lb-feet of torque, Black premium leather, F-Sport -wheels, voice activated based navigation, with back up camera, 3 zone auto climate control, heated seats included 2nd row, windshield de-icer, moonroof, power tilt and telescopic and much more!

$44,789

2010 Audi S5 4.2L V8

Stk# 3458A 104,500KM's 4.2L V8, Automatic, Heated Leather Seats, Navigation, Moonroof, Alloy Wheels, Full Climate Control

$34,898

2013 BMW 335i xDrive

Stk# 3441A 53,470KM's navigation, back up camera, foglights, cruise control, manually adjustable front seats, leather wrapped steering wheel, Bluetooth, sunroof, and much more!

$27,289

2013 BMW X5 xDrive35i

Stk# 160017A 85,885KM's 3.0L twin turbo I6, 300hp and 300lbs-ft of torque, Black leather, automatic and adaptive bi-xenon headlights, LED running lights, foglamps, automatic wipers, keyless ignition, iDrive electronics interface, Bluetooth connectivity, HD radio, auxiliary audio jack, iPod/USB audio interface, and much more!

$39,498

2011 Mercesdes-Benz C300 4matic

Stk# 3460A 45,000KM's V6 3.0L, 228hp and 221lb-ft of torque, sunroof, automatic headlights, cruise control, automatic climate control, tilt and telescoping steering wheel, 8-way power front seats, vinyl upholstery, Bluetooth, 8 speaker stereo with CD player, auxiliary audio jack, pop up 5 inch display screen, and much more!

$25,838

2012 Lexus IS 350 AWD

Stk# 3439A 81,240KM's voice activated HDD navigation system with back up camera, power moonroof, power tilt and telescopic steering wheel, rear window power sunshade, ventilated front seats, driver seat memory system with 3 settings, auto dimming exterior mirror

$27,289

2009 Lexus RX350 AWD

Stk# 160165A 69,501KM's heated front seats, 2 driver seat memories, 40/20/40 rear seat split, power tilt & telescoping steering wheel, garage door opener, rain sensing windshield wipers, and much more!

$23,529

2010 Lexus IS250C

Stk# 3446A 110,405KM's V6, 2.5L engine and 6-speed automatic, premium leather, voice activated hard drive navigation system, back up camera, Bi-Xenon HID adaptive and auto levelling headlights, headlight washers, power tilt and telescopic wood and leather wrapped steering wheel and shift knob, clearance and back up sensors, Bluetooth capability and much more!

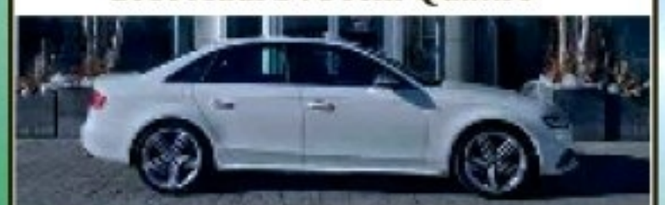
$27,270

2009 Lexus GS450h

Stk# 160268A 72,345KM's DVD based Navigation system with backup camera and Bluetooth technology, Mark Levinson Audio with cassette & DVD auto changer, clearance and backup sensors, and much more!

$32,480

2010 Audi S4 Prem Quattro



Stk# 3459A 66,237KM's supercharged V6, 3.0L engine and finished with silver/black leather, Navigation, back up camera, sunroof, automatic xenon headlights, LED daytime running lights, heated front seats, 60/40 split folding rear seats, Bluetooth, and much more!

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FIFA says it paid Sepp Blatter $3.76 million in 2015, and also reported a loss of $122 million for a year blighted by scandal.

NHL IN BRIEF

Panthers handle Leafs
Jussi Jokinen scored two strange goals to help the Florida Panthers to a 4-1 win in Toronto on Thursday night, further solidifying their Atlantic Division lead.

Jaromir Jagr and Teddy Purcell added empty-net goals for the Panthers.

Morgan Rielly scored for the Leafs, who had a two-game win streak snapped.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Crosby keeps Pens hot
Sidney Crosby scored a pair of highlight-reel goals and the Pittsburgh Penguins rallied past the Carolina Hurricanes 4-2 on Thursday night for their fourth straight victory.

Crosby extended his points streak to 10 consecutive games as Pittsburgh strengthened its grip on seventh in the crowded Eastern Conference playoff race.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wings strike in third
Henrik Zetterberg and Darren Helm scored in the third period to lead the Detroit Red Wings to a 3-1 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday night.

Luke Glendening also scored and Jimmy Howard stopped 27 shots as Detroit moved a point ahead of Philadelphia for the Eastern Conference's second wild-card playoff spot. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

American-born commissioner Gary Bettman presents 2015 Stanley Cup to Canadian Jonathan Toews. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

All-American worry

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

Bettman hopes Canadian fans keep watching post-season

With the rare prospect of an all-American NHL post-season looming large, Gary Bettman hopes Canadians still tune in to watch the battle for the Stanley Cup.

The NHL commissioner acknowledged in an interview there is a sense of uncertainty regarding TV ratings in Canada, with no Canadian teams likely to qualify for the playoffs for the first time since 1970.

Still, he was hopeful that fans north of the border would tune in regardless.

Bettman said local teams "tend to draw better" in terms of ratings.

"But as long as the hockey is entertaining and exciting and competitive we're hoping and expecting that fans will tune in and watch great hockey," he added.

The four lowest-placed teams in the NHL are Canadian, as are six of the bottom 10. The Toronto Maple Leafs and Edmonton Oilers currently have the fewest points in the league, just behind the Calgary Flames and Winnipeg Jets.

Last season five clubs from Canada — Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Vancouver — qualified for the post-season. One year earlier it was only one — Montreal, also the last Canadian team to capture the Stanley Cup in 1993.

> **Fifty per cent of the players ... are from Canada.**
> Gary Bettman

Bettman said the wealth of Canadian talent should be enough to attract interest, as should the appeal of exciting, competitive hockey.

From Jonathan Toews to Drew Doughty to Jamie Benn to Patrice Bergeron and Steven Stamkos, Canadian players will indeed be well represented come playoff time.

"Fifty per cent of the players in this game are from Canada so for people to suggest that there isn't still a Canadian-centric focus I think is a little misleading," Bettman said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

Thornton may play till age 40

Joe Thornton knows he would look a lot younger if he shaved his bushy, grey-streaked beard.

By far the oldest player among the NHL's leading scorers, the 36-year-old San Jose Sharks centre is getting better with age at a time when the league is trending younger. With nearly a point per game this season, he's on pace to become just the 13th player 35 and older to amass 80 points in a season since 1990.

"He's playing as well as I've ever seen him play, he really is," said Sharks general manager Doug Wilson.

"To me, he is a young 36-year-old and a lot of it is attitude and spirit. This guy is a special, special guy."

Exuberant in his passion for the game, Thornton sees no end in sight to his Hall-of-Fame career. Could he play as long as the now-44-year-old Jaromir Jagr?

"Ohhh man, what a question," said a relaxed, yet energetic Thornton during a phone interview from San Jose. "It would be great if I could, but that's still eight years away."

Playing until the age 40 seems more likely, said Thornton, who has one year remaining on his contract with the Sharks.

"I feel good. My body feels good. My mind feels good. I love going to the rink every day. I love the fellowship with the guys, the competition," Thornton said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Laprise out to make it big Down Under

MMA

'The Disciple' spreads wings to take on UFC Brisbane bout

After 11 straight fights in Canada, lightweight Chad (The Disciple) Laprise was ready to see the world.

He gets his wish Saturday night when he takes on England's Ross (The Real Deal) Pearson on a televised UFC card in Brisbane.

"I actually asked the UFC to fight on this card. Fighting in Australia has always been a dream, of mine," said Laprise. "I've always wanted to go there."

Australia is already part of his fight resumé. The 29-year-old from Chatham, Ont., who trains in Montreal, won "The Ultimate Fighter Nations: Canada vs. Australia" reality TV show as a welterweight.

Chad Laprise has fought 11 straight MMA contests on home soil here in Canada. THE CANADIAN PRESS/ANDREW VAUGHAN

Rival fighters became friends and Laprise has been training at Brendan (The Badger) O'Reilly's gym in Brisbane. O'Reilly, a TUF Nations alumnus, fights American Alan Jouban on Saturday's card (actually 9 a.m. Sunday Australian time).

Former heavyweight champion Frank Mir (18-10-0) takes on hard-hitting Kiwi Mark Hunt (11-10-1) in the main event at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre. Hunt is ranked ninth among heavyweight contenders while Mir is No. 10.

Laprise (11-1-0) was originally slated to fight Brazil's Alan Patrick. But eight days before the bout he was shifted to face Pearson (20-10-1 with one no contest) after Pearson's original opponent, Abel Trujillo, dropped off the card.

Former minor-league hockey enforcer Steve (The Boss) Bosse of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., fights New Zealand's James Te Huna on the main card in the Queensland capital.

Bosse (10-1-0) was knocked out in 29 seconds in his UFC debut last June by Thiago Santos.

Laprise, who won his first three UFC fights, is coming off a TKO loss to Francisco Trinaldo last August in Saskatoon when he got caught with a punch. Ironically he had obsessed about Trinaldo's "monster left hand".

"He's not a better fighter than me ... I got cracked with one big punch," he said.

This time, he says he's not going to worry about what his opponent is going to do.

"I'm going to go out there and do my thing," he said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

EUROPA LEAGUE

United's misery is deepened by 'Pool

A stunning solo goal by Philippe Coutinho helped Liverpool eliminate great rival Manchester United from the Europa League, while titleholder Sevilla and tournament favourite Borussia Dortmund also reached the quarterfinals with ease on Thursday.

Liverpool drew 1-1 with United at Old Trafford to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory, with Coutinho scoring the equalizer — and all-important away goal — on the stroke of halftime by dribbling into the box and applying an extravagant chip for his finish.

The draw for the quarterfinals, which also includes Sparta Prague, Braga of Portugal, Spanish pair Villarreal and Athletic Bilbao and Ukrainian powerhouse Shakhtar Donetsk, takes place in Switzerland on Friday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Scorer Philippe Coutinho. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Duo help Raps past Pacers

DeMar DeRozan and Kyle Lowry each scored 28 points to lead the Toronto Raptors over the Indiana Pacers 101-94 in overtime Thursday night. DeRozan had 10 points in the fourth quarter. Lowry added four assists and eight rebounds.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Day dazzles to Bay Hill lead

Jason Day one-putted his last seven holes Thursday and had a 6-under 66 to take a one-shot lead at the Arnold Palmer Invitational. Adam Scott headed a large group at 67 that included Henrik Stenson and Marc Leishman.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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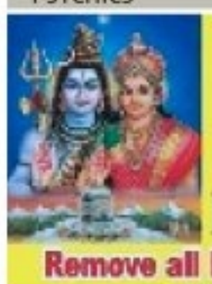

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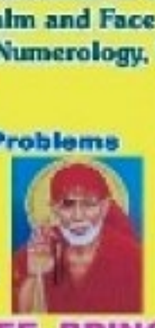

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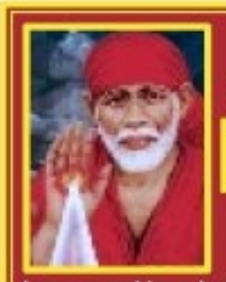

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PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

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Cook time: 30 minutes
Makes: 4 Sloppy Joes

Ingredients
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 chopped red pepper
- 2 (14 oz) cans of black beans, rinsed
- 1 (14 oz) can of chick peas, rinsed
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp maple syrup
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp chili powder
- 1/4 tsp paprika
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup shaved cheddar

Directions

1. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onions and peppers. Saute until the vegetables are softened.

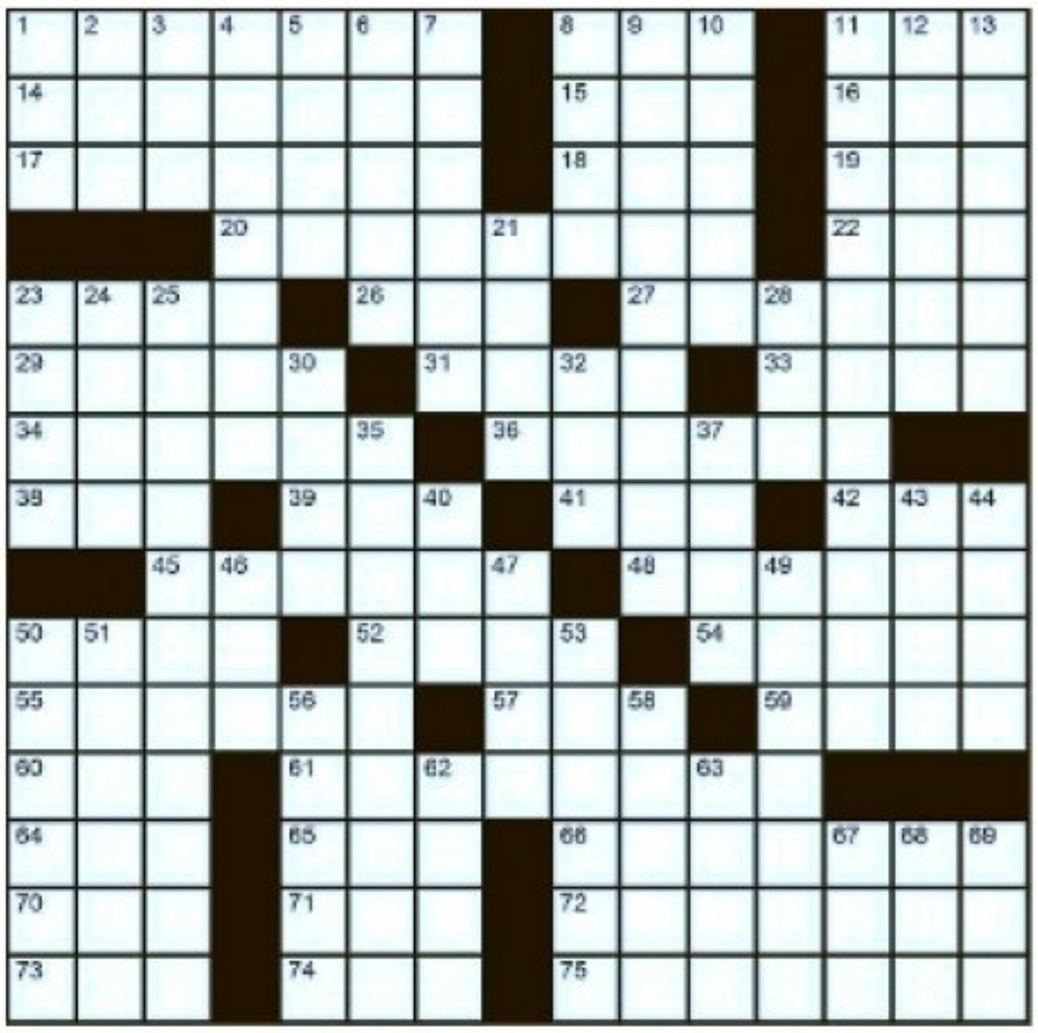
2. Add the beans, tomato sauce, vinegar, maple syrup, cumin, chili powder, paprika and salt. Simmer for 15 minutes.

3. Serve on toasted whole grain bun and sprinkle with cheddar cheese.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Unwavering
8. Butterfly logo co.
11. Dripping on the tree bark
14. Tributes
15. Stock mkt. debut
16. _-la-la
17. Fashionable
18. Women's _ (1970s movement)
19. Bard's evening
20. Direct opposite as per North, to South
22. "Jeff _." (Mid-2000s Canadian comedy series)
23. Wee word
26. _ Lanka
27. Canadian actress Ms. Cuthbert
29. McIntosh middles
31. Pressure unit
33. Some parrots
34. New cop
36. "Easy there...": 2 wds.
38. Tolkien creature
39. Alkali
41. Business bigwig, briefly
42. Howdies
45. British actress, _ Bonham Carter
48. Weightlifter's pride
50. Howard of "Dallas"
52. Fair
54. Aired again
55. Improve
57. Li'l old MTV show
59. Mr. Beatty's
60. Do this at the auction
61. Canadian canned soup brand
64. Give it _ _ (Try)
65. "...and now, without further _..."
66. "_ Flame" by The Bangles
70. Snazzy auto
71. Hollywood's Mr. Howard
72. "The Beachcombers" star Bruno
73. _ Francisco
74. Lettered airline, once
75. British Invasion band

DOWN
1. Initials-sharers of Suzanne Somers' Canuck hubby
2. On the _ (Precisely)
3. Ms. Schumer
4. Victor _, Investigative Reporter on CTV's "W5"
5. Opposin'
6. Aeries
7. Casual top with jeans
8. Simon's co-member in Prozzak
9. Bug-built bugs capturer: 2 wds.
10. The _ Peace Prize
11. Howie Mandel played Dr. Wayne Fiscus on what 1982 to 1988 medical drama?: 2 wds.
12. "Think" singer Ms. Franklin
13. 'Giant' attractions at the Toronto Zoo
21. Subatomic particle
23. Land unit
24. Benefit
25. Sam Roberts song that goes "Been looking for peace but they're bringing you war.": 2 wds.
28. 1965 hit song, when doubled
30. Part of a window
32. Mythical bird
35. Makeup kit item
37. Pinot _ (Wine variety)
40. Antacid brand
43. Apple tablet
44. Taxpayers' IDs in The States
46. Mr. Wallach
47. Sparkling wine city of Italy
49. Big name in multivitamins
50. BBQ sizzlers, Shish _ [var. sp.]
51. 2001 Kate Winslet WWII-set movie
53. Canadian songstress Lindi
56. _-topper (Hit song)
58. Approach nighttime
62. _ fide
63. Italian saint, Philip _
67. Edward Snowden headlines org.
68. Communication syst.
69. '_' _ for Lethbridge

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
The Sun moves into your birth sign at the weekend, so don't worry if you are feeling a bit under the weather at the moment because you will soon be back to your best.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
If you feel the need to cut yourself off from those around you over the next few days then do so. It may seem rude but good manners are less important now than getting your head in the right place.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Your recent hard work has not gone unnoticed. People are impressed by your attitude and there could be a promotion coming your way in the near future.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
The Sun crosses the career angle of your chart on Sunday, so it won't be long before you get the chance to move up in the world. But don't be tempted to cut corners.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
You may think you need to rip everything up and start again from scratch. But it isn't true and in fact would be a backward step. The good times will start in a matter of days, so be patient.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You have spent far too much in recent weeks and if you carry on there may be nothing left. The good news is you will discover a new source of income very soon.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
By the time the Sun enters your opposite sign of Aries on Sunday you should know for certain if a relationship is going to last or if it is best to go your separate ways.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
The Sun's move into the work area of your chart in just a few days means you may need to take on new chores and responsibilities. But know when to say "no" — and mean it.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Certain events may have upset you but there is no point dwelling on them. In a matter of days they will no longer matter. The Sun's change of signs on the 20th will cheer you up to no end.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The more you have been rushing here, there and everywhere in recent weeks, the more you must slow down and focus on matters closer to home. Give your full attention to partners and loved ones.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
The past few weeks have not been easy but you stuck at your task and very soon you will get your reward. The pendulum is about to swing in your favour.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
By all means show sympathy for someone who is finding the going tough at the moment, and do what you can to help them.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

	2				8		5	
5								6
	7		9				1	
6				1		9		
		4		3				8
	3				9		7	
8								4
	6		5				2	

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Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers from the play page.

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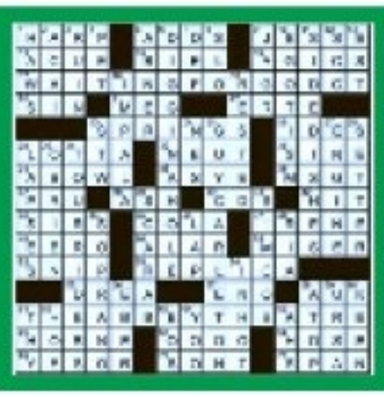

2	1	4	3	8	5	9	6	7
3	6	5	1	9	7	2	8	4
8	7	9	6	4	2	3	5	1
1	5	3	8	2	9	7	4	6
4	9	7	5	3	6	8	1	2
6	2	8	4	7	1	5	3	9
7	8	6	9	1	3	4	2	5
5	4	2	7	6	8	1	9	3
9	3	1	2	5	4	6	7	8

YOU ARE A CHAMPION

A champion seizes every opportunity to triumph over opponent. Every space and loophole that the opponent may want to exploit is blocked. In the same vein the devil should be resisted and given no room to operate. Even the bible says, " give no opportunity to the devil." *(Ephesians 4: 27 ESV)*. Jesus is the champion of all champions, you need him to remain victorious

For prayers and counseling call the pastor at 587.579.0454

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